

SUPPLEMENTS TO  
VIGILIAE CHRISTIANAE



# Divine Simplicity in the Theology of Irenaeus



JONATÁN SIMONS

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BRILL

## Divine Simplicity in the Theology of Irenaeus

# Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae

TEXTS AND STUDIES OF EARLY CHRISTIAN LIFE AND LANGUAGE

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# Divine Simplicity in the Theology of Irenaeus

*By*

Jonatán Simons



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The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available online at <https://catalog.loc.gov>  
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2023027608>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: [brill.com/brill-typeface](https://brill.com/brill-typeface).

ISSN 0920-623X

ISBN 978-90-04-67762-3 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-67763-0 (e-book)

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## Acknowledgements

First, I want to thank the many institutions and groups of people that helped in the shaping of this book. I am grateful to Australian Catholic University for granting me the Postgraduate Award which funded my studies. I also wanted to thank members of NAPS, AIEP/IAPS, and the ACU PGA scholarship committees, whose gifts allowed me to travel to various conferences and receive helpful feedback for many of the ideas herein. I also want to thank the members of the Institute of Religion and Critical Inquiry in Melbourne, especially the members of the Modes of Knowing Research team: Dr. Sarah Gador-Whyte, Dr. Michael Hanaghan, Dr. Dawn LaValle Norman, and Dr. Jonathan Zecher. They answered questions, helped with translations, and treated me as a colleague and a friend. In addition, I want to thank Dr. Jonathan Zecher and Dr. Ben Edsall for their helpful feedback at the candidature milestone seminars, and Dr. Anthony Briggman and Dr. Samuel Fernandez for their helpful suggestions during my examination process. I want to thank Fundación Universitaria Seminario Bíblico de Colombia, but especially the Academic Dean, Andrew Fields, for allotting time so that I could chip away at this book during my first two years of teaching. I also want to thank David Runia for encouraging me to publish this book with Brill, and Marjolein van Zuylen and Dirk Bakker, who patiently helped me through the publishing process.

Second, I owe a debt of gratitude to my thesis advisory team Dr. Lewis Ayres, Dr. Michael Champion, and Dr. Matthew Crawford. I am so thankful that Lewis took a chance on me, and he was right, ACU was the best place for me. He brought calming clarity, as we walked, talked, and shopped. I am thankful for Michael's patient teaching on how to read historically, but in particular, for his meticulous reading of my endless drafts. I am grateful for Matt's really hard questions, for his advice, which twice saved me months of work, and for the way he simplified problems to make them manageable. They exemplified life balance, managing their roles as a spouse, parent, and scholar. Dissertating under their supervision was better than I could have imagined. This book intertwines innumerable conversations with all of them, and sufficient acknowledgement of their individual work is impossible. As the lingering problems of this book demonstrate, I stubbornly hold to some bad thinking and writing habits, but I am so grateful for their patient guidance.

Lastly, I am grateful for family. To my dad, for teaching me to hound a question until it became many questions, and a mi mamá, por sacrificar tanto y por enseñarme como hacer algo, pero bien hecho. I am especially grateful to four of my best friends, Teresa, Norah, Caedmon, and Lina. They made the early

drafts of my writing useful by turning its pages into colouring pages and paper airplanes. They made daily pressures seem insignificant by asking if I saw anything special on the way home. In their questions and affirmations, they truly personify what it means to be a theologian. It has been a pleasure to see the world together, and they have, consistently, been the best part of my day.

# Abbreviations

For full reference, see Bibliography.

Abbreviations of ancient texts come from Lampe, G.W.H., ed. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961, and Whitmarsh, Tim, ed. *The New Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 4th ed. Oxford: OUP, 2018. Throughout this book, when the Latin passages from *Against Heresies* contain an asterisk (\*), it marks the beginning and end of the extant Greek manuscripts.

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
CUP	Cambridge University Press
GSC	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
Hv	Harvey, W.W., ed. <i>Santi Irenaei Episcopi Lugdunensis Libros Quinque Adversus Haereses</i> . 2 vols. Cambridge, 1857.
J ECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LLT	Library of Latin Texts A
LS	Lewis, Charlton T. and Charles Short. <i>A Latin Dictionary</i> . Oxford: OUP, 1956.
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George and Robert Scott, ed. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.
OUP	Oxford University Press
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
ThQ	<i>Theological Quarterly</i>
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum</i>



# Introduction

For Irenaeus of Lyons, the concept of divine simplicity is central for describing God and God's interaction with humans, or as some have labelled these two, theology proper (or metaphysics) and economy. There has been a recent wave of scholarly interest on Irenaeus' view of divine simplicity, but scholars disagree on the place of divine simplicity alongside these two theological approaches.<sup>1</sup> Some have focused on the latter and rejected the former—for example, a recent treatment by John Behr considers the theme of simplicity in Irenaeus, but rejects the claim that Irenaeus is deploying parameters for speech about God or that he is establishing a system of metaphysics logically prior to an economy revealed in scripture. For Behr, any conception of God must emerge solely from the economy. Others have focused primarily on the former without exploring the latter—Anthony Briggman's recent *God and Christ in Irenaeus* examines divine simplicity in Irenaeus as a doctrine separate from scripture. He explores divine simplicity as philosophical theology without developing an account of how and where it shapes the rest of Irenaeus' thought, particularly God's interaction with humanity. By his account, theology proper is developed prior to economy. I propose a *via media* that builds on the excellent work of both Behr and Briggman, but avoids dividing Irenaeus' argument to fit either of these modern categories. I argue that Irenaeus' claim, that God is simple, is both based on scripture and is used to interpret scripture. It is used to conceive of both God *in se* and God's interaction with creation.

In the first part of the book, I begin with the fundamentals of Irenaeus' account of simplicity. In *haer.* 2.13.3 God is described as “simple, and non-composite, and self-proportionate, and altogether similar and equal to himself” (*simplex et non compositus et similimembrius et totus ipse sibimetipsi similis et aequalis*) and yet may be spoken of as possessing or being a series of powers: “he is all mind, all spirit, all understanding, all thought, all reason, all hearing, all sight, all light and the entire source of all that is good” (*totus cum sit sensus et totus spiritus et totus sensuabilitas et totus ennoia et totus ratio et totus auditus et totus oculus et totus lumen et totus fons omnium bonorum*).<sup>2</sup> Because God is simple, the scriptural language describing God, such as God's Word or

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1 John Behr, “Synchronic and Diachronic Harmony: St. Irenaeus on Divine Simplicity,” *Modern Theology* 35, no. 3 (2019); Anthony Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus* (Oxford: OUP, 2019), 90–99.

2 *haer.* 2.13.3 (SC 294.114–116). A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies, Livre 11*, SC 294 (Paris: du Cerf, 1982).

God as light, cannot be understood in the same way as language about composite humans. Irenaeus introduces theological terminology for these descriptions about God and he sets limits on their possible meaning. Because of these parameters, while God is not comparable to humans, God can be understood in terms of himself, so the scriptural names and titles of God are mutually entailing (in *haer.* 2.13.8–9). By “mutually entailing” I mean that God’s names and powers imply one another without them being identical, since they are distinct in unity.<sup>3</sup> After exploring these themes in Irenaeus’ definition, I argue that they help shape descriptions of God in the rest of Irenaeus’ theology.

From the outset, I ought to clarify that in this book, I do not to ask whether Irenaeus’ account of simplicity answers challenges raised by fourth-century Nicene theology or modern critiques. Irenaeus provides the first extant Christian explanation of divine simplicity by developing beyond prior Christian appropriations of this philosophical concept, and by addressing second-century concerns reflected in texts from the Christian authors of Asia Minor and Rome that referred to divine simplicity. By focusing on his immediate context, I seek to avoid “retrospective history,”<sup>4</sup> but the result leaves some fourth-century and modern theological challenges unanswered. In the study of early Christian thought, scholars, such as Christopher Stead, have questioned the efficacy of early Christian appropriation of divine simplicity, claiming that early assessments of this principle could not cogently use the Biblical language of a personal God.<sup>5</sup> This would require that Irenaeus adhere to the modern

3 Stead labels this concept as “identical” and Ip as “inseparability”. I prefer Ip’s term, but to avoid implications carried by later descriptions of inseparable operations of the divine persons (as described by Ayres), I have opted for “mutually entailing”. Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 188–189; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 212–216, 348–358; Pui Ip, *Origin of Alexandria and the Emergence of Divine Simplicity before Nicaea* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2022), Chapter 3.

4 For an ongoing discussion against retrospective history, see John Passmore, “The Idea of a History of Philosophy,” *History and Theory* 5, no. 5 (1965); Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969); Adrian Blau, “Extended Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” *History and Theory* 58, no. 3 (2019).

5 Initially, Stead claimed that simplicity was a problem for orthodoxy in the first four centuries because (1) a self-absorbed unity cannot also be considered a social Trinity, (2) modern philosophy requires that language be univocal to carry meaning, and (3) simplicity would preclude an active God, particularly one who responds to prayer. Later in his career, Stead included Irenaeus in his criticisms. See Christopher Stead, “Divine Simplicity as a problem for orthodoxy,” in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. R. Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 265–266, 68; Christopher Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), 131. For another modern challenge to early Christian appropriations of divine simplicity, and a recent response see Pannenberg’s critique and

requirement of univocal language in order to present a cogent form of divine simplicity, a requirement which he explicitly rejects. Yet, Irenaeus is a writer who both claims that God is simple, and who is primarily known for his focus on the scriptural language of a personal God. The presence or absence of terms in Irenaeus' account are explored, not as evidence of proto-Monarchian or proto-Trinitarian tendencies, but in the context of questions contemporary to his period. As a theological polemic against various arguments of different opponents, *Against Heresies* contains the language of simplicity to provide a view of a personal God that counters the multiplicity and division from his opponents' views, addressing pressing concerns for his context.

## 1 Irenaeus' Mobility and Correspondence

Although Irenaeus only occasionally gestures toward Asia Minor, Rome, and Gaul, the record of his movement between these locations, and his ongoing epistolary correspondence with Asia and Rome after settling in Gaul, provide possible connections to theologically and philosophically aware circles where ideas related to divine simplicity were being exchanged.

To some extent, Irenaeus always kept one foot in Asia Minor. Before Irenaeus became bishop in Lyons, the churches of Gaul and Asia Minor were linked by the Gallic martyrdoms. In the letters to the churches of Asia and Phrygia, the martyrdom accounts of Christians in Lyons and Vienne (*HE* 5.1.1–5.3.3) specifically mention martyrs from Pergamum and Phrygia (*HE* 5.1.3). Before Irenaeus, there was an established connection between these geographically separated communities. It is possible that Irenaeus learned about the philosophical principle of simplicity before leaving Asia Minor. Asia had three of the educational centres of the Second Sophistic period (Ephesus, Pergamum, and Smyrna), so he could also have been exposed to it through an education outside the ecclesial context.<sup>6</sup> However, we have no biographical information to demonstrate

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Ip's excellent response. Ip, *Origen of Alexandria and the Emergence of Divine Simplicity before Nicaea*, Chapter 1; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988); Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God as a Dogmatic Problem of Early Christian Theology," in *Basic Questions in Theology* (Augsburg: Fortress Publishers, 1971).

6 Ewen Bowie, "The Geography of the Second Sophistic: Cultural variations," in *Paideia: The World of the Second Sophistic*, ed. Brarbara E. Borg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008). Moringiello explores the same possibility when considering Irenaeus' knowledge of rhetoric. Scott D. Moringiello, *The Rhetoric of Faith: Irenaeus and the Structure of the Adversus Haereses* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 7–9.



that he had any formal grammatical or rhetorical training. Instead, he describes how, as a child, he learned at the feet of Polycarp of Smyrna (*Letter to Florinus* in *HE* 5.20.4–7). This ecclesial training may have given him more than just a lineage for battling opponents through heresiological polemics.<sup>7</sup> A creed-like fragment that is attributed to Melito of Sardis, a contemporary of Irenaeus, describes the Incarnation of Christ, “clothed in flesh while not constraining the simplicity (ἀπλότητα) of his divinity.”<sup>8</sup> The language of simplicity was applied to God among bishops of Asia Minor. After Irenaeus left Asia Minor, he remained connected to its churches.<sup>9</sup> He used his influence in Rome on behalf of the bishops from Asia Minor during the Quartodeciman controversy by reprimanding the actions of Victor of Rome, and he did so by appealing to a precedent between Asia Minor and Rome (*HE* 5.24). He could have learned about divine simplicity from the philosophic or ecclesial context of Asia Minor, or after leaving, through ongoing correspondence.

Irenaeus’ road merely led through Rome, but his network there remained, as demonstrated by extant letters and his ongoing engagement with the different schools from Rome. The first record of Irenaeus in Rome is based on the Moscow manuscript of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, which claims that Irenaeus was in Rome when Polycarp was martyred (c. 156/157).<sup>10</sup> About twenty

7 He retells intimate stories of the Apostle John in Ephesus, who fled the bathhouse when Cerinthus entered, lest it collapse on him while near this “enemy of truth” (*haer.* 3.3.4), which is compared with the anti-heretical efforts of Polycarp of Smyrna.

8 *fr.* 14. Translation from Stuart Hall, ed., *Melito of Sardis: On Pasca and Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 81–82. Syriac and reconstructed Greek from I. Rucker, ed., *Florilegium Edessenum Anonumum* (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1933), 14–15. This Syriac fragment was preserved alongside another fragment (*fr.* 15) which is attributed to Melito, but the parallel Armenian, Ethiopic and Arabic are attributed to Irenaeus. In it, Jesus Christ is referred to as “perfect Intellect” before a long catena of descriptions that show him as present in the Old Testament (law, prophets, priests, kings) which is fulfilled through his incarnation, developing themes from the metric homily. It seems more likely that Melito is the author. For a discussion on the authorship, see Hermann Jordan, ed., *Armenische Irenaeusfragmente mit deutscher Übersetzung nach Dr. W. Lüdtke*, vol. TU 36.3 (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1913), 56–60. For more recent discussion, or to see a summary of sources for these references, see Alistair C. Stewart, ed., *Melito of Sardis: On Pasca, with the Fragments of Melito and other material related to the Quartodecimans* (Yonkers, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2016), 96–98.

9 Secord notes that a large number of specialists (Greek sophists and doctors) were welcomed to Gaul during this time. See Jared Secord, “The Cultural Geography of a Greek Christian: Irenaeus from Smyrna to Lyons,” in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, and Legacy*, ed. S. Parvis and P. Foster (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 32.

10 The dating of Polycarp’s martyrdom is based on the argument made by T.D. Barnes. Behr argues that Irenaeus was born around 130 CE, he would have visited Rome around 154–

years later, while Irenaeus was still a presbyter, a letter commending him to Eleutherus, bishop of Rome from 174–189 CE, accompanied the record of the martyrdoms of Vienne and Lyons.<sup>11</sup> Scholars have assumed that Pothinus, then bishop of Lyons, sent Irenaeus with letters destined for Rome and Asia to protect him from the persecution of 177 CE.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, Irenaeus probably arrived in Rome around 154/5 CE, was there through 156/7 CE, and later returned to Rome around 177 CE to carry the letter from Pothinus. Beyond visiting Rome at least twice and mediating in disagreements between the Sees of Rome and Asia Minor, Irenaeus also remained aware of the different Christian schools of Rome and their writings.<sup>13</sup> Despite having written *Against Heresies* from Gaul,<sup>14</sup> he claims to have commentaries written by the followers of Valentinus and texts written by other opponents (*haer.* 1.praef.2; 1.31.2; 4.praef.2), many of whom were based in Rome. John Behr has described the diversity of Christian communities in Rome (including Hermas, Cerdo, Marcion, Valentinus, Justin Martyr, and the Carpocratians), and concludes that “Rome was a microcosm of Christianity throughout the empire” that was “diverse to begin with, and this diversity increased only with the influx of more Christian teachers and leaders” who were working out how to “relate to each other collectively.”<sup>15</sup> Irenaeus participated in this effort, opposing many of these schools, but because of

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155 CE, and he would have been there in 156/7 CE during the martyrdom of Polycarp. See T.D. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 367–378; John Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons: identifying Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 67.

- 11 HE 5.1, 4. Eusebius places several letters together: the letter describing the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne was sent to the churches in Asia Minor, and was accompanied by a letter that addressed the prophetic dissension in Phrygia, and a letter of the martyrs commending Irenaeus to the bishop of Rome.
- 12 Based on his *Chronicon*, the date would be 167 CE, but scholars generally follow his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. See Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 16, n. 13.
- 13 Irenaeus specifically addresses the schools of Valentinus, Ptolemy, Marcion, and Basilides. I follow Markschie's argument for Valentinian schools. He argues that describing these groups as “schools” follows their own self-understanding, not just a heresiologist division. See Christopher Markschie, “Valentinian Gnosticism: toward the Anatomy of a School,” in *The Nag Hammadi Library after fifty Years*, ed. J. Turner and A. McGuire (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 401–438.
- 14 In the preface of Book 1, Irenaeus is writing from Gaul, and based on his list of bishops in Rome in *haer.* 3.3.3, Irenaeus completed Book 3 of *Against Heresies* while Eleutherus was still bishop, so before 189 CE.
- 15 Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 45–47. Behr argues that it was generally characters like Cerdo and Marcion who withdrew themselves by establishing their own churches, and the dozen Christian communities from the time of Paul (c. 50 CE) would certainly have grown in number by the second century.

his distance from the capital, he had to rely on the texts coming out of Rome and his past experiences there.

Irenaeus' knowledge of his opponents reflects this ongoing contact with Rome. Florinus, a student of Valentinus, had been an acquaintance of Irenaeus back in Asia Minor when they were young. Irenaeus' appeal to him is based on the teaching they both received from Polycarp.<sup>16</sup> However, he also wrote about him to Victor the bishop of Rome, warning against the teaching of this presbyter of Rome and describing the books he had written.<sup>17</sup> Irenaeus, in Gaul, had access to texts written by Florinus in Rome. While we do not know if Florinus ever examined the principle of divine simplicity, we do know that Ptolemy, another student of Valentinus, did. Ptolemy ends his *Letter to Flora* by distinguishing between the Demiurge who created the world and the Father who is simple (ἀπλοῦν) and singular.<sup>18</sup> Even if Irenaeus never read the *Letter to Flora*, if he had access to some writings of Ptolemy or his followers, it is likely that a discussion about his system of creation or divinity included the language of divine simplicity. Similarly, Tatian, who was the student of Justin (HE 5.13.1), wrote *Oratio ad Graecos* from Rome, a text which describes the Word springing forth from God's will of simplicity (ἀπλότητος).<sup>19</sup> Both Ptolemy and Tatian are explicitly mentioned in Irenaeus' refutation, so he knew of both of them, and as students of different schools in Rome, both of them used the language of divine simplicity in Christian discourse.<sup>20</sup> Rome was a crossroads and source for Irenaeus' exchange of letters, theological texts, and ideas; and both Tatian

16 According to Eusebius, Irenaeus wrote a treatise to a Roman presbyter Florinus, titled *On the Monarchy/That God is not the Author of Evil* (HE 5.20.1, 4–8), and while the entire letter is no longer extant, the section preserved by Eusebius shows Irenaeus appealing to Florinus as fellow students of Polycarp.

17 Irenaeus warned Victor about Florinus in *On the Ogdoad*, and though no longer extant, Eusebius claims that Florinus' Valentinianism was the cause of Irenaeus' warning. This is supported by the introduction found in the Syriac manuscript of this letter. See Syriac fragment 28 in W.W. Harvey, ed., *Santi Irenaei episcopi Lugdunensis libros quinque adversus haereses*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: 1857), 2.457.

18 G. Quispel, ed., *Ptolemy: Lettre a Flora*, SC 24 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1966), 77. Peter Lampe has argued that the Ptolemy referenced by Justin around 160 CE (2 *apol.* 2), and in the *Letter to Flora*, are the same person. See Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*, trans. M. Steinhauser, ed. M.D. Johnson (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 237–240.

19 *orat.* 5. For the composition of the *oratio* in Rome and this section of text from Tatian, see Molly Whittaker, ed., *Tatian: Oratio ad Graecos and fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), x, 10–11.

20 For further discussion comparing Irenaeus, Tatian, and Ptolemy's use of the language of simplicity, see Chapter 4, section 1.

and Ptolemy are two examples of early attempts to appropriate this principle for Christian discourse about God, attempts that very well may have been available to Irenaeus.

Scholars have noted how little Irenaeus refers to Gaul.<sup>21</sup> However, the influence of the See of Lyons and the quick reception of Irenaeus' text bolsters my view that Irenaeus remained connected to intellectual and ecclesial networks through the Roman empire. After the Gallic wars, the towns of Vienne and Lyons were established as colonies for veterans, and by the time of Irenaeus, just as Lyons had become the capital of Three Gauls,<sup>22</sup> so too the bishop of Lyons presided over all the churches in the region of Gaul.<sup>23</sup> The record of Cyprian in 250 CE shows an ecclesial boom with a rapid increase in the number of bishoprics established, so within a couple generations of Irenaeus, the Gallic churches grew exponentially.<sup>24</sup> The Quartodeciman controversy further demonstrated the influence of Irenaeus' See. Although Irenaeus followed the theology supporting the Roman position on Easter, he nevertheless chastised the Roman bishop's praxis of excommunicating the Asian bishops, and his advice was followed.<sup>25</sup> He had influence in ecclesial controversies throughout the empire. His influence can also be seen in the speedy reception of his writing. For example, within a generation, *Against Heresies* was cited in Carthage and Alexandria.<sup>26</sup> Irenaeus was an active participant in Chris-

21 Secord, "The Cultural Geography of a Greek Christian: Irenaeus from Smyrna to Lyons."

22 See Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 18, n. 17; Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 38, 103.

23 The precedence of Lyons is demonstrated by Eusebius's record of the vote before the Quartodeciman controversy. See *HE* 5.23.

24 Graeme Clarke, "Christianity in the first three centuries: Third-century Christianity," in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Crisis of Empire, AD 193–337*, ed. A. Bowman, P. Garnsey, and A. Cameron (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 590–591.

25 Irenaeus proposed a resolution between the churches of Rome and Asia based on the historical precedent of Polycarp and Anicetus. See *HE* 5.24.

26 The influence of the See of Lyons may help explain the quick reception of Irenaeus' text: The Greek text of *Against Heresies* was present in Egypt within twenty years of being written, as preserved by Oxy. 405, which is a citation of Matthew 3:16–17 from *haer.* 3.9.2–3. For discussion, see Charles E. Hill, "Irenaeus, the Scribes, and the Scriptures: Papyrological and Theological Observations from P. Oxy. 405," in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, and Legacy*, ed. S. Parvis and P. Foster (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012); Colin H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (London: OUP, 1977), 53. It seems that both Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria knew of the text of *Against Heresies* and cited it. See *adv. Val.* 5, and *strm.* 7.18. There is no doubt that Tertullian cites *Against Heresies*, and scholarship generally agrees with Hort, who used a philological examination of the two to argue that Tertullian used a Greek version of Irenaeus. For the view that Tertullian had access to a Latin version of *Against Heresies*, see Unger's introduction to his translation. F.J. Hort,

tian debates throughout the empire, and he was exchanging texts and ideas in circles that explored divine simplicity.

## 2 Irenaeus' Usage of Sources

Irenaeus' argument for divine simplicity uses three kinds of sources: (1) scripture, (2) his opponents and predecessors, and (3) philosophy and literature. In some ways, these are hard to distinguish from one another, since Irenaeus, his opponents, and his predecessors often refer to the same classical texts or disagree on the interpretation of the same scriptures. However, I can outline the general ways that his exposition of divine simplicity draws from these different sources.

Scholars often focus on Irenaeus' dependence on scripture,<sup>27</sup> but some scholars have argued that Irenaeus' definition of divine simplicity is devoid of scriptural support.<sup>28</sup> I disagree. First, when Irenaeus introduces divine simplicity, he cites Isaiah 55:8–9 to support his claim that God's thinking is unlike

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"Did Tertullian use the Latin Irenaeus?," in *Nouum Testamentum Sancti Irenaei Episcopi Lugdunensis*, ed. W. Sanday and C. Turner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923); D.J. Unger and rev J.J. Dillon, eds., *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against Heresies, Book 1*, ACW 55 (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 14–15. Clement's usage of Irenaeus is not based on clear citations of the text, and though Rousseau points out six different places where Clement's text parallels Irenaeus, some with the exact same phrasing, he concludes that they are not sufficiently similar to warrant being included in the manuscript list. See A. Rousseau, L. Doutreleau, and C. Mercier, eds., *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies, Livre v: introduction, notes justificatives, et tables*, SC 152 (Paris: du Cerf, 1969; reprint, 2006), 245–246.

27 Scholars examine Irenaeus' usage of scripture in three main ways. Some study Irenaeus' use of a scriptural book or passage. For example, see Stephen Presley, *The Intertextual Reception of Genesis 1–3 in Irenaeus of Lyons* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); D. Jeffrey Bingham, *Irenaeus' Use of Matthew's Gospel* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998); Bernhard Mutschler, *Das Corpus Johanneum bei Irenäus von Lyon* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006). Others examine the usage of Scripture to understand the structure of *Against Heresies*. The most influential study of Book 4 organises the structure of its argument according to scriptural citations. See Philippe Bacq, *De l'ancienne à la nouvelle alliance selon S. Irénée: Unité du livre IV de l'Adversus Haereses* (Paris: Éditions Lethielleux, 1987). Lastly, Lawson describes Irenaeus' theology, as a whole, as "biblical." See John Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus* (London: Epworth, 1948).

28 Richard Norris claims Book 2 lacks scriptural support, and Anthony Briggman claims there is a lack of a scriptural appeal in Irenaeus' definition of divine simplicity. See Richard Norris, "The Insufficiency of Scripture: *Adversus Haereses* 2 and the Role of Scripture in Irenaeus's Anti-Gnostic Polemic," in *Reading in Early Christian Communities: Essays on Interpretation in the Early Church*, ed. C. Bobertz and D. Brakke (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002); Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 92.

human thinking, for God is simple and all thought. Then, when he introduces divine simplicity, he claims that it agrees with scripture and the truth, the same support used to defend the Rule of Truth, appealing to the harmony of scripture from different parts of scripture (often referring to the Law, Prophets, the writings about the Lord, and/or the writings of the Apostles). As his argument develops, the principle of divine simplicity intersects with other theological themes, which then reveals the specific scriptural passages he has in mind. For example, in Book 2 he states that the many titles of the simple God are mutually entailing without giving Scriptural support, but in Book 3, through citations from the Septuagint, he supports his argument for the title “God” and “Lord” entailing both Father and Son, arguing in a way similar to Hebrews 1–3 and John 10. Much like the Rule of Truth, divine simplicity both summarises scriptural descriptions of God, and functions as a lens for how scripture is to be read (see Chapter 1 Section 2 for further discussion). His account of divine simplicity precludes using scriptural language about God to suggest division or parts within God.

Irenaeus, his opponents, and his predecessors were often adopting, adapting or refuting each other’s theological terminology. Friedrich Loofs is infamous in Irenaean scholarship for overstating the influence of Theophilus of Antioch on Irenaeus.<sup>29</sup> Since then, recent scholarship has sought to acknowledge influences on Irenaeus’ thought, such as Justin or Theophilus of Antioch, without ignoring his own contribution.<sup>30</sup> I follow this trend. For example, in Chapter 5 I argue that Irenaeus develops beyond Theophilus, who describes God’s Hands as helpers, because this could suggest parts in God and would undermine divine simplicity. Similarly, I highlight ways Irenaeus adapts the language that he shares with his opponents. Some scholars have been cautious about drawing conclusions about Valentinians and Irenaeus’ other opponents based on his testimony.<sup>31</sup> Yet, in many of the relevant passages, he acknowledges their shared

29 According to John Behr, Loofs “dissected *Against Heresies* into various supposed sources, even if these ‘sources’ are no longer extant,” and concluded that Irenaeus was hardly important as a theologian, but rather, had plundered Theophilus of Antioch without acknowledging his influence. Friedrich Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochen Adversus Marcionem und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenaeus* (Leipzig: J.S. Hinrichs, 1930); Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 14–15.

30 For example, Jackson Lashier structures his entire argument on the way Irenaeus builds on and differentiates himself from Justin, Theophilus, and Athenagoras. Jackson Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

31 For example, Thomassen argues that much of Irenaeus’ work was pulled from earlier heresiological works (based on Tertullian’s account of heresiological writings of Justin, Miltiades, and Proclus that are no longer extant) and that Irenaeus has contradictory

terminology, but challenges their theological conclusions. For example, the description of the “containing, not contained” God, from Shepherd of Hermas *Mandate* 1.1, was prominent in descriptions of God for Irenaeus, his opponents, and his predecessors.<sup>32</sup> Logan has convincingly argued that the last section of Irenaeus’ Book 1 (*haer.* 1.29–30) reflects a myth very similar to the *Apocryphon of John*, but he claims that Irenaeus was anxious to omit the description of a God who is “containing, not contained.”<sup>33</sup> This seems very unlikely, since Irenaeus had already acknowledged that his opponents use this terminology (*haer.* 1.1.1), and in the opening of Book 2, he claims that the way his opponents use this precise terminology is their common weakness. As a result, he then adopts it, but in a different way.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, both Ptolemy and Tatian describe God as simple in their own writings: one in the context of the Demiurge and the other in the context of God generating. Irenaeus opposes both of them by name, and elsewhere he engages the questions raised by their usage of the language of simplicity (see Chapter 4, section 1), so it is not impossible that he was aware of their usage of divine simplicity, and yet retained it for his own argument. Furthermore, in *Eugnostos the Blessed*, which has been labelled a “Gnostic text,” the author describes a God who is “all thought, all mind,” a description that is central to Irenaeus’ explanation of divine simplicity.<sup>35</sup> Thus, I launch this study with two assumptions. First, one cannot speak of an early consensus for the terminology of divine simplicity, either among Irenaeus’ opponents or his theological predecessors. Second, Irenaeus was adopting and adapting the same terminology for God used by both his opponents and his predecessors, and its presence

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meanings for ‘Valentinianism.’ Similarly, Dunderberg describes Irenaeus and other heresiologists as a “hostile source” that “are not neutral accounts of what Valentinians taught and did but often show outright hostility toward them ... [and] they did not aim at a balanced presentation of all aspects of Valentinian teaching.” Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the “Valentinians”* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 9–22; Ismo Dunderberg, “The School of Valentinus,” in *Companion to Second-Century Christian ‘Heretics’*, ed. A. Marjanen and P. Luomanen (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 7–10.

32 For a summary, see Chapter 3, n. 6.

33 Alastair H.B. Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy* (London: T&T Clark, 1996), 75. Irenaeus claims that various opponents use this theme, and Logan himself demonstrates that the theme was present in the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Tripartite Tractate*, the system of Basilides, *Eugnostos the Blessed*, and the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*. Irenaeus addresses the fact that many of his opponents use this terminology, but opposes a dualistic creation narrative that, for him, contradicts this terminology.

34 Fantino has shown Irenaeus knew of his opponents’ use of the term *oikonomia*, and I have argued the same for *homousios*. See Jacques Fantino, *La théologie d’Irénée* (Paris: du Cerf, 1994), 96–108; Jonatan Simons, “God and *eiusdem substantiae* in *Against Heresies* 2.17–18,” *Studia Patristica* 109, no. 6 (2021).

35 *Eug.* NHC III.73.3–14 (NHC 3.58); Meyer, 276–277.

in their writings did not dictate whether they were useful or dangerous, for they used these same terms to different ends.

Lastly, Irenaeus uses philosophy and literature to defend his description of a simple God. In the argument of divine simplicity, he explicitly draws on the terminology and arguments of pre-Socratic and Stoic philosophy to support his own claim and to argue that his opponents have misused many of these same authors to bolster their own cosmological systems. Previously, scholars argued that Irenaeus had little interest in philosophy and only had access to a doxography,<sup>36</sup> but recent scholarship has argued that he had greater philosophical knowledge.<sup>37</sup> Just prior to his introduction of divine simplicity, he employs Stoic psychology to argue that his opponents have wrongfully applied human affections and passions to God. Then, in his definition of divine simplicity, he cites Xenophanes, echoing not only his language, but also his opposition to the anthropomorphising of deities. Then, in the section immediately following his definition of divine simplicity (*haer.* 2.14), Irenaeus lists fifteen different poets and philosophers to suggest that his opponents rearranged, not only biblical references, but also classical and philosophical ones.<sup>38</sup> Irenaeus is not

36 Irenaeus had access to philosophical doxographies (see *haer.* 2.28.2, 7 and 3.25). William Schoedel, "Philosophy and Rhetoric in the *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus," *VC* 13, no. 1 (1959); W.C. van Unnik, "Two notes on Irenaeus," *VC* 30, no. 3 (1976); William Schoedel, "Theological Method in Irenaeus ('*Adversus Haereses*' 2.25–28)," *JTS* 35, no. 1 (1984); Anthony Briggman, "Revisiting Irenaeus' Philosophical Acumen," *VC* 65, no. 2 (2011).

37 For a summary of scholarship on Irenaeus' philosophical and rhetorical knowledge, see Briggman, "Revisiting Irenaeus' Philosophical Acumen."; Anthony Briggman, "Literary and Rhetorical Theory in Irenaeus Part 1," *VC* 69, no. 5 (2015); Anthony Briggman, "Literary and Rhetorical Theory in Irenaeus Part 2," *VC* 70, no. 1 (2016). While not conclusive, his usage of these sources suggests that Irenaeus had some sort of formal education. In *haer.* 1.praef.3, he claims that he did not have rhetorical training but this could be an instance of the *topos* of humility. Nautin suggests that he was educated in Rome: Secord suggests that he was trained in Smyrna as a contemporary with Aristides of Smyrna, along with other individuals from the Second Sophistic. Slusser argues that Irenaeus could have been trained by Justin, either in Rome or near Ephesus. According to *M. Just.* 3.3, Justin taught twice in Rome, but based on Eusebius, *HE* 4.18.6, most of his time would have been spent near Ephesus. See Pierre Nautin, *Lettres et écrivains Chrétiens* (Paris: Du Cerf, 1961), 93; Michael Slusser, "How much did Irenaeus learn from Justin?," *Studia Patristica* 40 (2006): 520; Secord, "The Cultural Geography of a Greek Christian: Irenaeus from Smyrna to Lyons," 25.

38 *haer.* 2.14.1–6. The list includes literary and philosophical authors, founders of movements and movements themselves: Antiphanes, Athenaeus, Thales of Miletus, Homer, Anaximander, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Plato, Epicurus, Empedocles, Hesiod, Aristotle, Stoics, Cynics, and Pythagoreans. Irenaeus also engages with Middle Platonic discussions on fate and necessity in relation to God (see Chapter 3, section 4) and language of eternity or sempiternity in relation to time (see Chapter 6, section 2.2), and fire as a material sub-



opposed to using philosophy, just to using it “wrongly.” He especially reflects philosophical language when exploring the principle of divine simplicity. For example, when examining his opponents claims on causality, he accuses them of blaming fate and necessity, instead of recognising providence as the cause of creation—language that is used in the Middle Platonic argument against Stoic ideas about fate and causality (*haer.* 2.5.4–2.6.1; see Chapter 3, section 4). In this case, Irenaeus illustrates his point with a citation of Homer, but elsewhere he also references Aristophanes, Hesiod, and Horace. Irenaeus is not writing a philosophical text, but he was able to manoeuvre the philosophical and literary texts and ideas of his time in a way that suggests he had both a higher level of education than is often recognised, and access to texts which permitted him to engage with Christian metaphysical debates from his own time period.

These three pieces, scripture, philosophy, and contemporary debates, come together in Irenaeus’ definition of divine simplicity to provide an image of God. A well-recognised trope in Irenaeus is his mosaic of the King, where he claims that the stones of scripture were shuffled by his opponents to make the image of a fox, but with the right organisation of scripture, one can see the correct image of God.<sup>39</sup> For divine simplicity, he is also concerned with the right ordering of philosophy. Just as his opponents shuffled the stones of scripture, they also formed a cento out of classical literature and philosophy (*haer.* 2.14.1) in order to defend their view of the creator and the activity of creation. Irenaeus is concerned with the proper image of God, so his theology takes statements about God from the Rule of Truth and the language of scripture, and, to avoid erroneous images, he clarifies their meaning through the principle of divine simplicity.

### 3 Structure

This book will be divided into two parts. In Part 1, I first show the place of divine simplicity within the larger argument of Book 2, and then focus on *haer.* 2.13, where divine simplicity is introduced. In Chapter 1, I challenge the scholarly

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stance (see Chapter 4, section 2). Each of these were debated topics in philosophical circles of the second century.

39 In this argument against the shuffling of scripture, Irenaeus also uses technical rhetorical terms. For recent discussion, see Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 105–106; Briggman, “Literary and Rhetorical Theory in Irenaeus Part 1.” For a helpful resource on the terms used, see R. Meijering, *Literary and Rhetorical Theories in Greek Scholia* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1987).

view that Book 2 is purely negative polemic and argue that theological principles can be gleaned from its constructive claims. Within its literary context, divine simplicity is a theological principle central to the argument of Book 2. In Chapter 2, I focus on *haer.* 2.13, where the claim that God is simple is introduced, and I argue that this claim helps Irenaeus navigate the tension between the Scriptural language of the one and the many: of God as the one creator alongside the many activities, names and powers of God. He explains the principle of divine simplicity in two ways that remain prevalent in the rest of *Against Heresies*. First, he explains it through specific theological terminology. For example, he states that God is “all mind, all word, etc.,” God creates and reveals “himself in/through himself,” and God’s will entails his activity. This means that God’s powers and God’s activity are not separated from God, because God is simple. Second, he explains what this terminology can mean by adhering to parameters for language about God: language about God is not like language about humans, and so the many Scriptural names and powers of God should not be understood as separated from one another but in light of one another, which I label as mutually entailing.

In Part 2, I argue that divine simplicity remains central to the rest of Irenaeus’ theology, since he uses the same terminology and parameters in the same kind of theological arguments elsewhere in *Against Heresies*. In these chapters I provide examples where the implications of divine simplicity are explored in other parts of Irenaeus’ theology. In Chapter 3 I focus on the divine will, and I argue that the phrase, “containing, not contained” is applied to God’s will for creation. When he claims that God’s will, thought, and action are simultaneous and cannot be separated, he depends on the principle of divine simplicity. In Chapter 4 I focus on divine generation, where God’s generated powers are described as (1) united; (2) contemporaneous; (3) of the same substance; and (4) simple, uniform, and altogether equal and similar, and I argue that God’s powers remain distinct, though simple and one. His account of divine generation depends on simplicity but distinguishes between God’s powers. In Chapter 5 I focus on divine activity in the “Hands of God” metaphor. In this metaphor, (1) God’s creation of the world and God’s revealing of himself are described as one activity; (2) God’s will and activity for creation are described as one; and (3) the activity of Father, Son and Spirit are described as God *ipse ab/in/per semetipso*. I argue that this unity of activity is best understood as the activity of a simple God. Lastly, in Chapter 6, I argue that because of divine simplicity, God’s names and powers are mutually entailing, so in Irenaeus’ description of creation, God’s power entails his wisdom and goodness, and the titles “Lord” and “God” entail both Father and Son. Divine simplicity is not an anomaly of *haer.* 2.13, but it remains central to the descriptions of God and God’s interaction with creation in Irenaeus’ theology.



**PART 1**

*Divine Simplicity in haer. 2.13*





## Theological Claims in Book 2 of *Against Heresies*

When studying Irenaeus' theology, scholars often avoid Book 2. For some, it is "purely negative polemic," while others simply avoid the earlier, more deconstructive sections of *Against Heresies* (Books 1–2), and prefer the later, more constructive and developed arguments (Books 3–5).<sup>1</sup> This chapter has two interwoven purposes: to argue that theological claims about God can be gleaned from Book 2, and to argue that divine simplicity is central to the larger argument of Book 2. First, I use Book 1 as a comparative test case: highlighting key principles for Irenaeus' theology introduced in the constructive claims of Book 1. Scholars have identified the Rule of Truth as one of Irenaeus' key theological principles, and it first appears in the constructive claims of Book 1, a book which is otherwise mostly negative polemic. Then, I suggest that Book 2 can be read in the same way, and I walk through each of its three larger constructive claims, outlining the contours of his theological argument. In Book 2 Irenaeus shapes an argument about God,<sup>2</sup> that the one God is creator (*haer.* 2.1–2), that the one God is simple (*haer.* 2.13), and that the one God is revealed in the harmony of scripture (*haer.* 2.27–28). Within the argument of Book 2, Divine simplicity is central to each of these other claims about God. This general discussion lays the groundwork for a more detailed focus on Irenaeus' claim that God is simple (in Chapter 2 of this book), and it introduces the ways in which this concept of divine simplicity is then used in the rest of Irenaeus' theology (in Part 2).

1 The polemical nature is clear from the title, *Refutation and Overthrowal of Knowledge falsely so-called* (*haer.* 4.praef.1; see also *HE* 5.7.1). Yet Richard Norris has claimed that Book 2 is, "a piece of purely negative polemic" that is meant to "establish the pointlessness" of his opponents' system without any apparent scriptural exegesis. Richard Norris, "Who Is the Demiurge? Irenaeus' Picture of God in *Adversus Haereses* 2," in *God in Early Christian Thought: Essays in Memory of Lloyd G. Patterson*, ed. B. Daley, T. Gaden, and A. McGowan (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 10–11. According to Anthony Briggman, Norris's initial statement about Book 2 is misleading, for Norris later says of *haer.* 2.1, "For once ... Irenaeus is not arguing in a purely negative spirit. He is not dismantling a Gnostic position so much as he is back-handedly asserting or commending his own view of what a real 'Demiurge' must be and how such a being must be related to the created order." Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 74 n. 19. He is citing Norris, "Who Is the Demiurge?," 15. Nevertheless, this chapter's response still holds, since I argue that constructive claims can be found beyond *haer.* 2.1. Norris exemplifies a trend. Until recently, studies on Irenaeus' theology rarely cited from Book 2.

2 Both Briggman and Moringiello have argued this recently. See Chapter 2 in each of their respective books. Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*; Moringiello, *The Rhetoric of Faith*.

## 1 Beyond “Purely Negative Polemic”: Theological Claims in Books 1–2

One interpretive challenge for readers of Book 2 is its highly polemical and deconstructive tone. This can make it difficult to ascertain Irenaeus’ own theological position. Generally, he uses a series of “if P, then Q” arguments. Sometimes, he momentarily grants P of his opponents in order to demonstrate that, whether holding to his or his opponents’ position, Q remains true. On these occasions, his argument is more like “even if P, nonetheless Q,” and so important theological principles (Q) are recognisable even in negative polemic.<sup>3</sup> However, within this negative polemic, sometimes Irenaeus provides constructive claims with his own view. This was a rhetorical strategy used in forensic speeches. Scott Moringiello has demonstrated how Irenaeus’ writing reflects the rhetorical conventions of the Second Sophistic,<sup>4</sup> and he provides a comprehensive organization of *Against Heresies* through the lens of rhetorical discourse. Irenaeus follows the structure of a forensic speech with moments of epideictic oratory, as described in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and Quintilian’s *Institutes of Oratory*.<sup>5</sup> In Aristotle, when two speeches present two sides of an argument, if the opponent has spoken well, one must first refute their points before arguing one’s own position.<sup>6</sup> Moringiello shows that, in general terms, this major shift divides the

3 A focus on constructive claims within the negative polemic of Irenaeus is not an entirely novel approach. Bruno Reynders, whose lexicon on Irenaeus’ text is still the definitive work, argued this long ago. See B. Reynders, “La polémique de saint Irénée: Méthodes et principes,” *Recherches de théologie et médiévale* 7 (1935). This chapter is not representative of the negative tone in Book 2, but the constructive portions do provide a view into Irenaeus’ theological perspective.

4 Moringiello, *The Rhetoric of Faith*, 7–9.

5 Of the many studies on Irenaeus’ usage of rhetorical tools, Scott Moringiello’s recent book is particularly helpful. In particular, he focuses on the five steps of a rhetor (*prooimium*, *narratio*, *probatio*, *refutatio*, and *recapitulatio*). For a methodological summary of his paralleling Irenaeus with rhetoric handbooks, see Moringiello, *The Rhetoric of Faith*, 9–19. Studies of Irenaeus’ rhetoric can be traced back to Schoedel, “Philosophy and Rhetoric in the *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus.” Recently, Irenaeus’ use of rhetorical tools and terms has again come under scholarly scrutiny. See, for example, Dale L. Sullivan, “Identification and Dissociation in Rhetorical Exposé: An Analysis of St. Irenaeus’ ‘Against Heresies,’” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1999); Lewis Ayres, “Irenaeus vs. the Valentinians: Toward a Rethinking of Patristic Exegetical Origins,” *JECs* 23, no. 2 (2015); Briggman, “Literary and Rhetorical Theory in Irenaeus Part 1.”; Briggman, “Literary and Rhetorical Theory in Irenaeus Part 2.”; Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*.

6 *rhet.* 1418b16–18 (LCL 193.458). Translation from J.H. Freese, ed., *Aristotle: Art of Rhetoric*, LCL 193 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926). “It is only after having combated all the arguments, or the most important, or those which are plausible, or most easy to refute, that you should substantiate your own case.”

first and latter parts of *Against Heresies*: Irenaeus first offers a forensic discourse (*haer.* 1–2), and then shifts to an epideictic (*haer.* 3–4) and deliberative discourse (*haer.* 5).<sup>7</sup> However, he has also noted that each of the Books has its own sections of forensic discourse, epideictic discourse, and deliberative discourse,<sup>8</sup> so while *Against Heresies*, as a whole, does have a sweeping movement, there are also sections of each of these styles scattered throughout. When Irenaeus gives a constructive claim within a section of otherwise negative polemic, he echoes the strategy of forensic speeches in Book III of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. According to this text, the response to one's opponent should not occur in an entirely separate section of the speech, but arguments of an opponent should be presented alongside a counter-argument, since opposites are more recognisable when side-by side.<sup>9</sup> Books 1 and 2 of *Against Heresies* exemplify this latter rhetorical strategy, with constructive claims presenting Irenaeus' position within mostly negative polemic.

A second challenge is a lack of consensus on the structure of Book 2, or *Against Heresies* as a whole for that matter. Some scholars believe that as he wrote, Irenaeus realised the need for Books 4 and 5, implying that they contain his more developed theology, while others, and I agree with this latter group, see Books 1–5 as a coherent, planned book.<sup>10</sup> As Irenaeus develops his theology,

7 Moringiello, *The Rhetoric of Faith*, 15.

8 Moringiello, *The Rhetoric of Faith*, 16.

9 *rhet.* 1418b (LCL 193.456–459). "Refutative enthymemes are more popular than demonstrative, because, in all cases of refutation, it is clearer that a logical conclusion has been reached; for opposites are more noticeable when placed in juxtaposition. The refutation of the opponent is not a particular kind of argument, but belongs to the proofs .... He who replies should first state the arguments against the opponent's speech, refuting and answering it by syllogisms, especially if his arguments have met with approval. For as the mind is ill-disposed toward one against whom prejudices have been raised beforehand, it is equally so toward a speech, if the adversary is thought to have spoken well. One must therefore make room in the listener's mind for the speech one intends to make; and for this purpose you must destroy the impression made by the adversary."

10 For a summary on the lack of consensus regarding the structure of Book 2, see Rowan Greer, "The Dog and the Mushrooms: Irenaeus's view of the Valentinians Assessed," in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism*, ed. B. Layton (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 151–156; D.J. Unger and rev J.J. Dillon, eds., *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against Heresies, Book 2*, ACW 65 (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 4–8. For a summary of arguments on whether Books 3–5 were part of Irenaeus' original plan, see Unger and Dillon, ACW 65, 2–9. There are two main perspectives: (1) that Irenaeus conceived of Books 1–5 from the beginning, and (2) that Irenaeus realised that his task was incomplete at the end of each section, since the intentions in each preface do not match their conclusion, and he repeatedly promises more in a following book. For view (1), Norris believes that Books 1–5 were all part of the original plan, but the most comprehensive summary of this perspective is found in Moringiello's book.



I will highlight the continuity of theological themes from Book 2 in these later books.<sup>11</sup> Some theological principles remained important to *Against Heresies* from its inception, and their presence and development in Books 3–5 suggests that their importance persisted.<sup>12</sup> The concept of divine simplicity has this trajectory, for its importance persists.

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View (2) is the majority view, followed by Unger (in the introduction to Book 1), Sesboüé, Minns and Behr. Minns believes that the first two books were intended to fulfill the title, and that Books 3–5 were written after the first were sent off. This seems to be followed by Behr, who uses the prefaces and conclusions to argue that Books 1 and 2 were meant to cover the “refutation” and “overturning” (ἐλεγχος and ἀνατροπή) promised in the title, but progressively at the end of Books 2, 3, and 4, he became aware that the task, initially conceived, was incomplete. Briggman adapted this to substantiate his view regarding the influence of Theophilus. Norris, “The Insufficiency of Scripture,” 66; Moringiello, *The Rhetoric of Faith*; Unger and Dillon, *ACW* 55; Bernard Sesboüé, *Tout récapituler dans le Christ: Christologie et sotériologie d’Irénée de Lyon* (Paris: Desclée, 2000); Denis Minns, *Irenaeus: an Introduction* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 7–9; Anthony Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: OUP, 2012); Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 74–77. My argument does not stand or fall on either of these views, since I read Books 3–5 as depending on and developing the claims about God in Book 2, but I do read *Against Heresies* as coherent. For a time, many influential works on Irenaeus saw a lack of coherence and original thought in his work. See H.H. Wendt, *Die christliche Lehre von der menschlichen Vollkommenheit* (Göttingen, 1882); Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochen Adversus Marcionem und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenaeus*. For early rebuttals of these views, see Reynders, “La polémique de saint Irénée: Méthodes et principes.”; F.R. Montgomery Hitchcock, “Loof’s Theory of Theophilus of Antioch as a Source of Irenaeus Part 1,” *JTS* 38, 150 (1937); F.R. Montgomery Hitchcock, “Loof’s Theory of Theophilus of Antioch as a Source of Irenaeus Part 2,” *JTS* 38, 151 (1937); Bacq, *De l’ancienne à la nouvelle alliance selon S. Irénée*.

11 The Latin manuscripts also present a challenge of organisation, but the argument in this chapter does not depend on a particular ordering. Each of the Latin manuscript families have different omissions and order, but in the last two centuries, significant progress has been made in this organisation. For a full discussion, see A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies, Livre II: introduction, notes justificatives, et tables*, SC 293 (Paris: du Cerf, 1982; reprint, 2006, 2013), 17–82, especially the table on pp. 69–80.

12 This view of continuity between Book 2 and the rest of *Against Heresies* challenges Norris, who describes Book 2 as “something of an oddity if not an anomaly,” and “much of what he says in Book 2 is seldom echoed, much less explicitly resumed, in the later books of *Adversus haereses*. Book 2 appears, then, to be largely if not entirely self-contained—an enterprise separable and indeed separate from that of Books 3–5.” Norris, “The Insufficiency of Scripture,” 63.

## 2 The Rule of Truth (*Haer.* 1.10 and 1.22)

Book 1 can serve as a test case to my approach, for although it is mostly negative polemic, its two main constructive claims (*haer.* 1.10 and 1.22) introduce the rule, which scholars agree is one of Irenaeus' key theological principles.<sup>13</sup> In these two sections, Irenaeus briefly contrasts his own claim for unity alongside his opponents' plurality. Scholars who have outlined the argument of Book 1 disagree on how the different parts fit together, but they agree that these two sections are the only two constructive sections of Book 1.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, despite their disagreements on the primary purpose of Book 1, scholars agree on the central theological significance of this rule in *Against Heresies*. Thomas Ferguson calls it "the centerpiece of Irenaeus' entire argument," John Behr calls it the "fullest description given by Irenaeus of the faith received by the apostles," and Moringiello says that its statements about God are, "the first principles of any interpretation of Scripture."<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere, Irenaeus describes scriptural

13 Jeffrey Bingham provides an exhaustive historiographical assessment regarding the structure of Book 1, and applies Bacq's methodology of reading Irenaeus as Biblical weaving. D. Jeffrey Bingham, "The bishop in the mirror: Scripture and Irenaeus's Self-understanding in *Adversus Haereses* Book One," in *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church*, ed. R.J. Rombos and A.Y. Hwang (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 48–53. Cf. Bacq, *De l'ancienne à la nouvelle alliance selon S. Irénée*. The organisational structures of Rousseau, Behr, Donovan, and Norris each point to these two portions as either introducing or concluding the main sections. The only exception is found in Donovan's view of *haer.* 1.22, but even here, she views it as introducing a subsection. A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies, Livre 1: introduction, notes justificatives, et tables*, SC 263 (Paris: du Cerf, 1979; reprint, 2008); Mary Ann Donovan, *One Right Reading?* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997); Richard Norris, "Irenaeus of Lyons," in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, ed. L. Ayres, F. Young, and A. Louth (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 45–52; Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 85.

14 In their organization of the structure of Book 1, Rousseau has *haer.* 1.10 and 1.22 as the bookends to an *inclusio*, Behr has them as the introductions to two different sections, Donovan has them both as subsections, and Moringiello describes them both as an excursus. A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies, Livre 1*, SC 264 (Paris: du Cerf, 1979), 394; Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 85; Donovan, *One Right Reading?*, 43, 46; Moringiello, *The Rhetoric of Faith*, 34–38.

15 In the most recent summary, Devin White shows just how many different opinions there are of this rule. Frances Young calls it a theological abstract on key doctrine, Eric Osborn first calls it a theological argument and then clarifies that it joins Bible with tradition and faith with life, John Behr calls it the hypothesis of faith found in the symphony of scripture, Paul Blowers calls it the early Christian metanarrative of communal faith and practice, and Lewis Ayres calls it a collection of ways for speaking about the content of the Gospel. Valdemar Ammundsen, "The Rule of Truth in Irenaeus," *JTS* 13, no. 52 (1912); J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 76–88; Alfred Beng-

interpretation in the context of the Rule of Truth (in *haer.* 2.27–28), the four Gospels establishing the Rule of Truth (in *haer.* 3.11.1), the words of Christ as the Rule of Truth (in *haer.* 4.35.4), and the three articles of faith (Father, Son, and Spirit) as the Rule of Faith (in *Dem.* 3 and 6).<sup>16</sup> As a result, the importance of the rule for Irenaeus' entire theology throughout *Against Heresies* is not doubted, even though it is introduced in a book that is otherwise negative polemic and it is not even mentioned in Book 5.<sup>17</sup> This constructive claim of Book 1 introduces a theological principle that is central to the rest of Irenaeus' theology.

The constructive claims of the one God as creator in the Rule of Truth (*haer.* 1.10 and 1.22.1–2) are developed and given more precision in Book 2. For example, the claim that God is simple (in Book 2) clarifies certain statements made about God in the rule. As in Book 1, Book 2 continues to make constructive claims by expanding and clarifying the earlier claims about God from the rule within otherwise negative polemic. In Book 1, Irenaeus introduces his view of God in this rule:

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sch, *Heilsgeschichte und Heilswissen: Eine Untersuchung zur Struktur und Entfaltung des theologischen Denkens im Werk 'Adversus Haereses' del hl. Irenäus von Lyon* (Leipzig: St. Benno-Verlag, 1957), 51ff; Bengt Hägglund, "Die Bedeutung der 'regula fidei' als Grundlage theologischer Aussagen," *Studia Theologica* 12 (1958); Norbert Brox, *Offenbarung, Gnosis, und gnostischer Mythos bei Irenäus von Lyon: Zur Charakteristik der Systeme* (Salzburg und München: Verlag Anton Pustet, 1966), 105–116; Roch Kereszty, "The Unity of the Church in the Theology of Irenaeus," *The Second Century* 4, 4 (1984); Eric Osborn, "Reason and the Rule of Faith in the Second Century AD," in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honor of Henry Chadwick*, ed. R. Williams (Cambridge: CUP, 1989); Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 143–149; Paul Blowers, "The *Regula Fidei* and the Narrative Character of Early Christian Faith," *Pro Ecclesia* 6 (1997); Thomas Ferguson, "The Rule of Truth and Irenaeus' Rhetoric in Book 1 of 'Against Heresies,'" *VC* 55, no. 4 (2001): 356, 58; Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 14, 111; Lewis Ayres, "Irenaeus and the 'Rule of Truth': A Reconsideration," in *The Rise of the Christian Intellectual*, ed. L. Ayres and H.C. Ward (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020); Devin White, "Losing the Plot: Irenaeus, Biblical Narrative, and the Rule of Truth," in *Telling the Christian Story Differently: Counter-Narratives from Nag Hammadi and Beyond*, ed. F. Watson and S. Parkhouse (London: T&T Clark, 2020); Moringiello, *The Rhetoric of Faith*, 36.

- 16 Rule of Faith in  $\zeta\omega\alpha\mu\alpha\tau\eta\varsigma\ \pi\omega\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\nu\eta$  in *Dem.* 3 and  $\lambda\upsilon\alpha\rho\eta\ \zeta\omega\alpha\mu\alpha\tau\eta\varsigma$  in *Dem.* 6. Behr back-translated the first of these to  $\kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\omega\iota$ . Articles of faith  $\kappa\eta\lambda\iota\mu\ \zeta\omega\alpha\mu\alpha\tau\eta\varsigma$  in *Dem.* 6. Behr back-translates this to  $\kappa\epsilon\phi\acute{\alpha}\lambda\alpha\iota\omicron\nu$ . Karapet ter-Mekertschian, ed., *Des heiligen Irenäus Schrift zum Erweise der apostolischen Verkündigung*, TU 31 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1907), 3, 5; Karapet ter-Mekertschian and rev. S.G. Wilson, eds., *S. Irenaeus Εἰς ἐπίδειξιν τοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ κηρύγματος, The Proof of the Apostolic Preaching with seven fragments*, PO 12.5 (Paris: 1919), 661, 64; John Behr, ed., *St. Irenaeus: On Apostolic Preaching* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 41, 43. See also B. Reynders, *Vocabulaire de la 'demonstration' et des fragments de saint Irénée* (Éditions de Chevetogne, 1958), 33, 16.
- 17 I highlight this because the term "simple" (*simplex*) is not explicitly used in relation to God outside Book 2 or in the *Demonstration*.

The Church ... received from the apostles and their disciples the faith in one God the Father Almighty, the “Maker of heaven and earth and the seas and everything in them” (cf. Ex 20:11; Ps 145[146]:6; Acts 4:24; 14:15) and in the one Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit ...

Ἡ μὲν γὰρ Ἐκκλησία ... παρὰ δὲ τῶν Ἀποστόλων, καὶ τῶν ἐκείνων μαθητῶν παραλαβοῦσα τὴν εἰς ἓνα Θεὸν Πατέρα παντοκράτορα, τὸν πεποιηκότα τὸν οὐρανὸν, καὶ τὴν γῆν, καὶ τὰς θαλάσσας, καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς, πίστιν καὶ εἰς ἓνα Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὸν σαρκωθέντα ὑπὲρ τῆς ἡμετέρας σωτηρίας· καὶ εἰς Πνεῦμα ἅγιον,

Ecclesia ... et ab apostolis et discipulis eorum accepit eam fidem quae est in unum Deum Patrem omnipotentem, *qui fecit caelum et terram et mare et omnia quae in eis sunt*, et in unum Christum Iesum Filium Dei, incarnatum pro nostra salute, et in Spiritum Sanctum,<sup>18</sup>

In this passage, Irenaeus goes on to describe the activity of God, particularly Christ's life, death, resurrection, and immanent return. He clarifies that this activity of creating and of recapitulating humanity, was not done by another creator apart from God, nor by another Christ. Rather, one and the same God created and revealed himself. These claims about God are reiterated when the “Rule of Truth” is referenced explicitly:

The Rule of the Truth that we hold is this: There is one God Almighty, who created all things through His Word; He both prepared and made all things out of nothing, just as scripture says: “For by the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth” (Ps 32[33]:6). And again: “All things were made through Him and without Him was made not a thing” (Jn 1:3).... These He did not make through Angels or some Powers that were separated from His thought. For the God of all things needs nothing. No, He made all things by His Word and Spirit, disposing and governing and giving all of them existence. This is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, above whom there is no other God, nor a Beginning, nor a Power, nor a Pleroma. This is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we shall demonstrate. If, therefore, we hold fast this rule, we shall easily prove that they have strayed from the Truth, even though

18 *haer.* 1.10.1 (SC 264.154). Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

their statements are quite varied and numerous. It is true, nearly all the heretical sects, many as they are, speak of one God; but they alter Him by their evil-mindedness.<sup>19</sup>

Cum teneamus autem nos regulam ueritatis, id est quia sit unus Deus omnipotens qui omnia condidit per Verbum suum et aptauit et fecit ex eo quod non erat ad hoc ut sint omniaa, quemadmodum Scriptura dicit: *Verbo enim Domini caeli firmati sunt, et Spirituoris eius omnis uirlus eorum, et iterum: Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso facium est nihil ....* non per Angelos neque per Virtutes aliquas abscissas ab eius sententia, nihil enim indiget omnium Deus, sed et per Verbum et Spiritum suum omnia faciens et disponens et gubernans et omnibus esse praestans; hic qui mundum fecit, etenim mundus ex omnibus; hic qui hominem plasmauit; hic Deus Abraham et Deus Isaac et Deus Iacobs, super quem alius Deus non est neque Initium neque Virtus neque Pleroma; hic Pater Domini nostri Iesu Christih, quemadmodum ostendemus—, hanc ergo tenentes regulam, licet ualde uaria et multa dicant, facile eos deuiasse a ueritate arguimus. Omnes enim fere quotquot sunt haereses Deum quidem unum dicunt, sed per sententiam malam immutant.<sup>20</sup>

Once again, he claims that the one God is creator, but this time, he provides more detail. God did not create through another angel or power separated from his thought, but rather he created through the Word and Spirit. This is especially pertinent, because he later introduces the claim that God is simple to specify how the oneness of God is preserved in relation to the descriptions of God's thought and word (*haer.* 2.13). In the rule, Irenaeus also recognises that his opponents call God "one," and he recognises that they use the scriptural language of God's Word, but by separating God's thought and word and by separating God from the activity of creation they are describing God as composite. Divine simplicity enables Irenaeus to manoeuvre between language of the *one* God as creator and the *many* scriptural descriptions of God's activity.

There is a close relationship between these expressions of the rule, and Irenaeus' concept of divine simplicity. Divine simplicity expresses, more precisely, what is expressed in the rule. It specifies what is meant by the claim that God is one, that God is creator, that God did not create through another

<sup>19</sup> Translation from Unger and Dillon, *ACW* 55, 80–81.

<sup>20</sup> *haer.* 1.22.1 (SC 264.308–310).

power, and that God created through his Word and Spirit. In particular, it is one way in which Irenaeus argues that although his opponent's claim that God is "one," their descriptions of God's power do not align with scripture or the rule, which results in a misconception of God.<sup>21</sup> If the Rule of Truth is merely a text, a pre-credal summary of the Christian faith and/or scripture, then Irenaeus' definition of divine simplicity only describes God in a way similar to the rule through philosophical terminology. On the other hand, if Irenaeus' reference to a rule is rather, as recently argued by Ayres, a reference to "a supple and complex language for identifying the standard for thought that the Church's faith provided,"<sup>22</sup> then the principle of divine simplicity can be understood as a particular expression of the rule itself. Ayres has convincingly argued that the rule is a complex set of relationships between terms and concepts, and is a reference point between the scriptures and faith received by the community, and that community's interpretation and theological speculation. As such, Irenaeus' notion of divine simplicity adds conceptual clarity to several claims within the rule, and is, in some ways, a further expression of the rule itself.

### 3 The One God Is Creator (*Haer.* 2.1–2)

In Book 2 Irenaeus begins to tease out the implications of the affirmations about God that are found in the rule. In first half on Book 2 (*haer.* 2.1–19), Irenaeus focuses on the theme of creator and creation. He argues that his opponents' system is founded on the view that God himself did not create but was separated from the activity of creation, and he calls this the *primo et maximo capitulo* of his opponents' *regula*.<sup>23</sup> While refuting his opponents' rule, he cla-

21 For a specific argument on how Irenaeus uses divine simplicity to develop the claims of the rule, see Chapter 6, section 2.1.

22 Ayres, "Irenaeus and the 'Rule of Truth': A Reconsideration," 163.

23 He argues that, by invalidating this single principle, he has invalidated their entire argument. Just as a sip of the ocean proves its saltiness or a small scratch on a "golden" statue exposes layers of clay to prove its real worth, so too this single part of their theology will expose their entire system as false (*haer.* 2.19.6). In the comparative lexicon, Reynders does not show any Greek word being translated as *capitula*, but Rousseau suggests it might have been κεφάλαια. See B. Reynders, *Lexique comparé du texte grec et des versions latine, arménienne et syriaque de l'Adversus Haereses de saint Irénée*, 2 vols. (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1954), 2:47; A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, eds., *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies, Livre III: introduction, notes justificatives, et tables*, SC 210 (Paris: du Cerf, 1974), 202. *Regula* is sometimes translated as ὑπόθεσις or in relation the "Rule of Truth," as κανών. See Reynders, *Lexique comparé*, 2:278. For a discussion showing the importance of ὑπόθεσις, κεφάλαια,

rifies his own. For Irenaeus, the one God is the creator who is “containing, not contained,” a claim he supports with exegesis that remains central to the rest of *Against Heresies*.

Irenaeus challenges the way his opponents characterise God as “containing, not contained” (*Mand.* 1.1), but he retains this terminology within his own argument (see Chapter 3). However, unlike his opponents, he uses it to claim that God himself created:<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, it is good for us to have to begin with the first and greatest heading, with the Demiurge God, who made heaven and earth and all that is in them (cf. Ex 20:11; Ps 145[146]:6; Jn 1:3; Acts 4:24; 14:15), whom these blasphemers say is the fruit of degeneracy,<sup>25</sup> and to show that there is not another either above him nor after him, nor did he make everything through any other operation except by his own purpose and pleasure, since he is the only God and only Lord and only Author and only Father and the only one who contains all things, so that he himself would be revealed in all things.

Bene igitur habet a primo et maximo capitulo inchoare nos, a Demiurgo Deo, qui fecit caelum et terram et omnia quae in eis sunt, quem hi blasphemantes extremitatis fructum dicunt, et ostendere quoniam neque super eum neque post eum est aliquid, neque ab aliquo motus sed sua sententia et libere fecit omnia, cum sit solus Deus et solus Dominus et solus Conditor et solus Pater et solus continens omnia et omnibus ut sint ipse praestans.<sup>26</sup>

According to Irenaeus, the goal of his opponents was to distance the First Cause from the corruption of the material world, so although they described God as “containing, not contained,” they also argued that creation occurred beyond his realm, power, and knowledge. Irenaeus uses the metaphor of containment to argue that God himself must be the creator, and that creation happened within

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and ἀρχαί for understanding the work of Book 1 and 2, and Irenaeus' larger understanding of the rule, see Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 103–120.

24 The description of a God who is “containing, but not contained” was prominent by the second century, in both Irenaeus' predecessors and opponents. For discussion, see Chapter 3, n. 6.

25 *Extremitatis*, which is the circumference or outer boundary, is translated by Unger as “degeneracy,” based on the rest of Irenaeus' description of the creation myth. See Unger (ACW 65.17).

26 *haer.* 2.1.1 (SC 294.26).

God's power and knowledge.<sup>27</sup> This containment metaphor builds on the claim that God "made heaven and earth and everything in them," (also in the Rule of *haer.* 1.10), which he repeats near the beginning and end of Book 2 (summarised here and in *haer.* 2.30.9).<sup>28</sup> The God who contains all must have made all. Scholars have noted that the theme of one God as the creator who is "containing, not contained" is the key for understanding Book 2 and remains central to *Against Heresies*.<sup>29</sup> For example, in *haer.* 4.20, he will describe God's Hands, the Son and Spirit, through whom he himself "established, made, adorned and contains (*continet*) everything."<sup>30</sup> The one God, the creator who contains and is not contained, as introduced in this constructive claim of Book 2, is fundamental to Irenaeus' theology.<sup>31</sup>

In the opening of Book 2, Irenaeus summarises the exegetical foundation for his claim that God himself caused creation. First, he illustrates his claim. When a king plans a battle, when an architect plans a public works, or when a craftsman cuts and mills some wood, although other people do the building or tools do the cutting, the king, architect, and craftsman are each the cause for the different activities.<sup>32</sup> In this same way, God is the cause of creation (*haer.*

27 He uses "containing, not contained": (1) spatially, to argue that matter is not beyond God's power but he is not confined to space, (2) temporally, to argue that God acts in time but is not bound by time, (3) cognitively, to argue that God knew about creation but remains incomprehensible, and (4) providentially, to argue that God created of his own purpose and freely and not by fate and necessity. For discussion, see Chapter 3, section 4.

28 The "demiurge" alongside the creation of heaven, earth, and all that is in them only appears in *haer.* 2.1.1, and 2.30.1. However, the argument of God creating heaven, earth, and all that is in them appears fifty-eight times. For a later example in a larger argument, see *haer.* 3.3–12, and for an example that includes a description of God's hands, see *haer.* 4.20.2.

29 Greer sees this metaphor as the concise definition of Irenaeus' theological premise in Book 2. See Greer, "The Dog and the Mushrooms: Irenaeus's view of the Valentinians Assessed," 156. Though many scholars have examined this metaphor, William Schoedel's initial article is still the best place to start. William Schoedel, "Enclosing, not Enclosed: The early Doctrine of God," in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: in Honorem Robert M. Grant*, ed. W.R. Schoedel and R. Wilken (Paris: Editiones Beauchesne, 1979).

30 *haer.* 4.20.1 (SC 100.624). For examples of scholarship that traces this metaphor from Book 2 into *haer.* 4.20, see Norris, "Who Is the Demiurge?," 34; Bacq, *De l'ancienne à la nouvelle alliance selon S. Irénée*, 165–166; Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 71–84.

31 For further discussion on the metaphor of containment, see Chapter 3 of this book, and for further discussion of this metaphor in *haer.* 4.20, see Chapter 5, section 2.

32 This metaphor of the king is the prominent political metaphor for describing God's sovereignty. He uses the metaphor of an emperor only once. Just as those within the Roman Empire know of the existence of the emperor and enjoy his sovereignty through the *pax Romana* though they have never seen him, so too people under God's sovereignty know



2.2.3). Irenaeus begins his exegetical defence by alluding to, “the God of all, who established and made everything by the Word” (cf. *Mand.* 1.1).<sup>33</sup> He argues that the different natures in creation do not require a corrupt or inferior creator, like his opponents’ intermediary demiurge between the Pleroma and the material world. Instead, God himself planned different natures and is their cause:

Rather, himself in himself, he made everything just as he wants, predetermining everything in a way that is indescribable and incomprehensible to us, giving to all things their harmony and order and beginning of creation, [giving] to the spiritual [beings] spirituality and invisibility, to the supercelestial [beings] celestuality, to the Angels an angelic [nature], to the aerial [beings] an aerial [nature], to the aquatic [beings] an aquatic [nature], and to the earthly [beings] an earthly [nature], to everything the perfect substance of qualities (cf. Gen 1:21, 24–25), and everything that was made, he made by his untiring Word.

sed ipse in semetipso secundum id quod est inenarrabile et inexcogitabile nobis omnia praedestinans fecit quemadmodum uoluit, omnibus consonantiam et ordinem suum et initium creationis donans, spiritalibus quidem spiritalem et inuisibilem, et supercaelestibus caelestem, et

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of him (*haer.* 2.6.2). It is possible that these references to a king are based on Biblical texts referring to God as king, or opponents who referred to themselves as part of the “kingless” generation. In their article on the term and concept of “kingless” (ἀβασιλευτος; ἀβασιλευτον γένος) within Nag Hammadi texts, Painchaud and Janz date the emergence of this term to c. 225 C.E. because of its presence in Hippolytus and because “Irenaeus does not mention it.” Louis Painchaud and Timothy Janz, “The ‘Kingless Generation,’ and the Polemical rewriting of certain Nag Hammadi Texts,” in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration*, ed. J. Turner and A. McGuire (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

- 33 *haer.* 2.2.4 (SC 294.38). omnium Deus Verbo condidit omnia et fecit. In *haer.* 4.20.2 Irenaeus cites the entire verse (SC 100.628): *Primo omnium crede quoniam unus est Deus, qui omnia constituit et consummavit et fecit ex eo quod non erat ut essent omnia: omnium capax et qui a nemine capiatur*. A. Rousseau, ed., *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies, Livre IV*, 2 vols., SC 100 (Paris: du Cerf, 1965). While I admit that this is not a perfect citation of *Mand.* 1.1, we know that it is the foundation of Irenaeus’ description of the God who is “containing, not contained,” and both *haer.* 2.2.3 and *Mand.* 1.1 use similar verbs to describe the creative work of the Word (*condidit et fecit* in *haer.* 2.2.3) *ex nihilo*, so it stands to reason that this is the scripture behind his argument. For studies on Irenaeus’ usage of the Shepherd of Hermas, see Matthew Steenberg, “Irenaeus on Scripture, *Graphé*, and the Status of Hermas,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (2009): see especially pp. 35–45; D. Jeffrey Bingham, “Senses of Scripture in the Second Century: Irenaeus, Scripture, and Noncanonical Christian Texts,” *Journal of Religion* 97, no. 1 (2017).

Angelis angelicam, et animalibus animale, et natantibus aquatilem, et terrigenis terrigenam, omnibus aptam qualitatis substantiam: omnia autem quae facta sunt infatigabili Verbo fecit.<sup>34</sup>

This section introduces important terminology for Irenaeus' theology of creation that will be examined more closely elsewhere, including God creating various kinds of nature in harmony (*consonantiam*, see section 5 of this chapter),<sup>35</sup> and God "himself in himself" (*ipse in semetipso*) creating through His Word (see Chapter 5, section 2). For now, I want to highlight the way his scriptural exegesis bolsters the larger argument of Book 2 regarding the creator. After alluding to Genesis 1 and *Mandate* 1.1, he explicitly cites the rest of the passages that are central to his theology of creation:

As John the disciple of the Lord said of him, "Everything was made through him, and without him nothing was made" (Jn 1:3). In "everything"

34 *haer.* 2.2.4 (SC 294.38). Rousseau is confident in his retroversion, particularly since there are many supporting Greek fragments with similar arguments. In particular, he notes the relationship with each kind of nature, and the translation of *aptus* which is elsewhere translated from ἀρμόζουσιν (in *haer.* 5.28.1 and 5.36.2), linking creation to glorification in the harmony of worthy dwelling places prepared by the Word (in Jn 14:2). See Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 293, 210–212.

35 While Irenaeus' opponents affirm that there is a direct correlation between the nature of the creator and the nature of what is created (a spiritual demiurge could not create material natures), Irenaeus argues that God could create different kinds of nature, and that these different natures can coexist (especially a soul in a material body). I have not found anyone that links this passage with Genesis 1:21–25, even though Irenaeus then uses the familiar exegetical grouping of Genesis 1, Ps 32[33]:9 and Eph 4:6. Neither Pressley nor Holsinger-Friesen note this as a reference to the Genesis account or the *Timaeus*. Pressley, *The Intertextual Reception of Genesis 1–3 in Irenaeus of Lyons*, 88. Steenberg does note *haer.* 2.2.5 using these three passages together, but does not reference this passage in *haer.* 2.2.4, but he specifically states that Irenaeus never utilises Genesis 1:6–25 apart from a single usage in *haer.* 1.18. See Matthew Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation: The Cosmic Christ and the Saga of Redemption* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 88. This view of different natures becomes foundational to his views on the resurrection in *haer.* 5.16.11, where a soul and body are shown to be able to coexist in eternity because they were made by the hands of God in the same substance as they will be resurrected. For discussion on this text, see Fantino, *La théologie d'Irénée*, 318. This passage also parallels the Platonic description of a good demiurge creating different natures. *Timaeus* 40A (LCL 234.39). εἰσὶ δὲ τέτταρες, μία μὲν οὐράνιον θεῶν γένος, ἄλλη δὲ πτηνὸν καὶ ἀεροπόρον, τρίτῃ δὲ ἔνυδρον εἶδος, πεζὸν δὲ καὶ χερσαῖον τέταρτον. "Now there are four of these kinds: first, the heavenly race of gods; next, the kind that has wings and travels through the air; third, the kind that lives in water; and fourth, the kind that has feet and lives on land." Translation from Donald J. Zeyl, ed., *Plato: Timaeus* (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000), 26.

is the world, according to us. Therefore, it was made by his Word, since scripture in Genesis says all things which exist for us, God made through his Word (cf. Gen 1:3–26). David describes it similarly, “For he spoke and it was made, he commanded and it was created” (Ps 32[33]:9; 148[149]:5). Therefore, what will we believe regarding the construction of the world: in what is preached by the heretics, this foolish and inconsistent babble, or in the disciples of the Lord and in Moses, the faithful servant and prophet of the Lord (cf. Num 12:7; Heb 3:5)?<sup>36</sup> It is he who first narrates the beginning of the world saying, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” (Gen 1:1) and so on, but neither gods nor angels [created].

Indeed, this God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostle Paul said this, “One God the Father, who is over all, and through all, and in all of us” (Eph 4:6). Already, we have shown that there is one God. We will show even more from the Apostles and the teachings of the Lord. How is it, then, that one could abandon the words of the prophets, the Lord, and the apostles to listen to those who say nothing sound?

quemadmodum et Iohannes Domini discipulus ait de eo: *Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil*. In omnibus autem est et hic qui est secundum nos mundus. Et hic ergo a Verbo eius factus est, sicut Scriptura Geneseos dicit omnia quae sunt secundum nos fecisse Deum per Verbum suum. Similiter autem et Dauid exsequitur: *Quoniam ipse dixit, et facta sunt; ipse mandavit, et creata sunt*. Cui igitur magis credemus de mundi fabricatione, hisne qui praedicti sunt haereticis sic fatua et inconstantia garrientibus, an discipulis Domini et fidei famulo Dei Moysi et prophetarum? Qui et primo genesim mundi enarrauit, dicens: *In principio Deus fecit caelum et terram*, et deinceps reliqua omnia, sed non Dii neque Angeli.

2,6. Quoniam autem hic Deus est Pater Domini nostri Iesu Christi, et de hoc Paulus apostolus dixit: *Vnus Deus Pater, qui super omnes et per omnia et in omnibus nobis*. Iam quidem ostendimus unum esse Deum; ex ipsis autem apostolis et ex Domini sermonibus adhuc ostendemus. Quale est enim, prophetarum et Domini et apostolorum relinquentes nos uoces, adtendere his nihil sani dicentibus?<sup>37</sup>

36 Hebrews reference noted in D. Jeffrey Bingham, “Irenaeus and Hebrews,” in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy*, ed. S. Parvis and P. Foster (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2012), 71–72.

37 *haer.* 2.2.5–6 (SC 294.40–42).

Early in Book 2, Irenaeus is weaving together the key Scriptures central to his view of God, particularly in relation to creation.<sup>38</sup> Scholars have noted that these six scriptural passages (Genesis 1, Psalm 32[33], John 1, Matt 11:27, Ephesians 4:6, and *Mand.* 1.1) provide the basis for Irenaeus' theology of creation, whether examining Irenaeus' theology of creation (Steenberg), his exegesis in later books (Bacq and Fantino), or his usage of particular passages of scripture (Bingham and Presley).<sup>39</sup> In fact, as Table 1 shows, this is the only instance

38 The usage of these verses challenge Norris' claim that in Book 2, Irenaeus steps outside scriptural language as though scripture was insufficient for his argument. Norris, "The Insufficiency of Scripture," see especially 74–76. Norris makes two claims in this regard. The first is that the key scriptural passage of Matthew 11:27 is not used by Irenaeus until *haer.* 4.6.1, but Irenaeus does reference it, at bare minimum, in *haer.* 1.2.5; 1.20.3; 2.6.1; 2.14.7; 2.30.9; and 3.11.6. See *Biblia Patristica: Index de citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature patristique*. (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1986), 1.256–257; R. Luckhart, "Matthew 11,27 in the 'Contra Haereses' of St. Irenaeus," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 23 (1953): 67. The second claim is that the only strictly exegetical discussion in Book 2 is on the Valentinian use of numbers. This passage provides just one of many examples in Book 2 where Irenaeus uses scripture to present and defend his theological position or his own reading of scripture.

39 For studies on the intersection of these passages, see Fantino, *La théologie d'Irénée*, 233–234; Bacq, *De l'ancienne à la nouvelle alliance selon S. Irénée*, 323–325; Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 65–67. Bingham's focus is on Ephesians 4:6. For studies on particular passages, see D. Jeffrey Bingham, "Himself within Himself: The Father and His Hands in Early Christianity," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 47 (2005): 139–142; Presley, *The Intertextual Reception of Genesis 1–3 in Irenaeus of Lyons*, 74–77. I was initially tempted to describe the connection between these passages as "intertextual," but its usage in Classical or New Testament studies suggests that this term is a minefield. See Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988); Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Presley does use the term "intertextuality" in reference to Irenaeus. See Presley, *The Intertextual Reception of Genesis 1–3 in Irenaeus of Lyons*, 3, n. 9; Jeffrey Bingham and Clayton Jefford, ed., *Intertextuality in the Second Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2016). This book will describe this phenomenon rather than label it. There are times that, though Irenaeus does not cite a line directly, it is likely that he has it in mind, citing only a few lines of a verse, but including the rest of it in his argument. Thus, I have included Genesis 1–2 and John 1 as one kind of reference, relying on the many available studies on Irenaeus' usage of these texts to inform these connections. For Genesis 1–3, I used Charles Kannengiesser, "The 'Speaking God' and Irenaeus's Interpretive Pattern: The Reception of Genesis," *Abhandlungen Zur Sozialethik* 15 (1998); Anders-Christian Jacobsen, "The Importance of Genesis 1–3 in the Theology of Irenaeus," *ZAC* 8, no. 299–316 (2005); Thomas Holsinger-Friesen, *Irenaeus and Genesis: A Study of Competition in Early Christian Hermeneutics* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009); Presley, *The Intertextual Reception of Genesis 1–3 in Irenaeus of Lyons*. For John 1, I compare with Mutschler, *Das Corpus Johanneum bei Irenäus von Lyon*; D. Jeffrey Bingham, "Christianizing Divine Aseity: Irenaeus Reads John," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, ed. R. Bauckham and C. Mosser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008);

TABLE 1      Key Scriptural texts for Irenaeus' Theology of Creation

Gen 1–2	Jn 1	Ps 32(33)	Eph 4:6	Mand. 1.1
1.9.3	1.9.3			
1.22.1	1.22.1	1.22.1		1.22.1
1.30.1–3			1.30.1–3	
2.2.5	2.2.5	2.2.2, 5	2.2.6	2.2.4
2.30.9				2.30.9
2.34.3–4		2.34.3–4 3.8.3 (v.6, 9)		
3.11.5	3.11.5			
3.18.1	3.18.1			
3.21.10	3.21.10			
3.24.2		3.24.2		
4.20.1–4	4.20.1–4		4.20.2	4.20.1–4
4.32.1	4.32.1		4.32.1	
5.1.1–3	5.1.1–3			
5.2.1	5.2.1			
5.16.2	5.16.2			

where they all appear together, thus providing the most complete Scriptural support for his theology of creation.

These passages continue to appear in the rest of *Against Heresies* in different groupings and sequences, and through standard and composite citations, to support particular points about creation.<sup>40</sup> In addition to citing these verses, Irenaeus supports his claim by appealing to the harmony found in different *kinds* of scripture, by explicitly appealing to John, David, Moses, and Paul. This

40      Brendan Harris, “Irenaeus’s Engagement with Rhetorical Theory in his Exegesis of the Johannine Prologue in *Adversus Haereses* 1.8.5–1.9.3,” *VC* 72, no. 4 (2018).  
As defined by Adams and Ehorn, “a text may be considered a composite citation when literary borrowing occurs in a manner that includes two or more passages (from the same or different authors) fused together and conveyed as though they are only one.” Sean Adams and Seth M. Ehorn, eds., *Composite Citations in Antiquity*, 2 vols., The Library of New Testament Studies (London: Bloomsbury), 1.4. Though I have not found this definition applied to the works of Irenaeus, it is used for comparable sections in Justin Martyr. See Chapter 9, Philippe Bibichon, “Composite Features and Citations in Justin Martyr’s Textual Composition,” in *Composite Citations in Antiquity: Jewish, Graeco-Roman, and Early Christian Uses*, ed. S. Adams and S.M. Ehorn (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

appeal to different kinds of scripture is repeated when he references the prophets, Lord and Apostles—a summary statements that often appears alongside his key theological claims.<sup>41</sup> Here it is used to argue that scriptural harmony supports the claim that the one God is the creator who is “containing, not contained,” who is the cause of creation, and who created by his Word. This constructive claim in Book 2 introduces terminology and exegesis that explain the language about the creator from the Rule of Truth in a way that remains central to his theology of creation. These claims lead to his argument regarding divine simplicity, since a separated power or angel did not create, but the one God himself created through his own power.

#### 4 God Is Simple (*Haer.* 2.12–13)

After this key exegetical section supporting his view of creation, the text is mostly negative polemic,<sup>42</sup> until the second large theological claim of Book 2,

41 For example, just before the Rule of Truth (in *haer.* 1.8), Irenaeus states that their (probably Valentinian) system is one that neither the prophets, nor the Lord, nor the apostles taught (the three being repeated three times in three different ways). This set of three is a literary marker for understanding the “mosaics” of scripture whose proper arrangement produces the image of the king. This division into sayings of the prophets, Lord, and apostles (that includes all three) is found in 1.8.1; 2.2.6; 2.35.4; 3.5.3; 3.8.1; 3.17.4; 4.6.1; 4.28.3; 4.34.1; 4.36.5; 4.36.6; 4.41.4; 5.praef.1. See Brox, *Offenbarung, Gnosis, und gnostischer Mythos bei Irenäus von Lyon: Zur Charakteristik der Systeme*, 120–126. Denis Farkasfalvy speculates that this kind of description emerged as a reaction to Marcion. Denis Farkasfalvy, “Prophets and Apostles’: The Conjunction of the Two Terms before Irenaeus,” in *Texts and Testaments*, ed. E.W. March (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1980).

42 Between *haer.* 2.1–2 and *haer.* 2.12–13, there are several short constructive theological claims. In *haer.* 2.6.1–2 and 2.9.1 there are two short affirmations that God is knowable to all. In *haer.* 2.6.1, after citing Matthew 11:27, which affirms that no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son reveals Him, Irenaeus claims that, “all know that there is one God, the Lord of all.” For the importance of this scriptural reference, see Luckhart, “Matthew 11:27 in the ‘Contra Haereses’ of St. Irenaeus.” Before and after this affirmation are references to Romans 1 and 9 respectively, supporting his claim that God is known, to some extent, through creation, further exemplified by the metaphor of an emperor who is known by those within the Roman Empire even if they never see him (*haer.* 2.6.2). This is reinforced in *haer.* 2.9.1, where Irenaeus asserts that the Lord teaches that “the Father who is in heaven” (from Matt 5:16, 45; 6:1, 9) is the Creator, and this is unanimously followed, both by the prophets and apostles, which in turn is followed by “the whole church around the world,” and by those who hold to contrary doctrines in other areas, for this teaching is taught to the pagans by creation itself (*haer.* 2.9.1). In *haer.* 2.10, Irenaeus twice affirms *creatio ex nihilo*, particularly in the context of creation occurring according to the will and power of God. In *haer.* 2.10.2 and 2.10.4 he asserts that God

where Irenaeus further clarifies this language about the one God as creator by claiming that God is simple (*haer.* 2.12–13). According to Irenaeus, his opponents describe God as one, but they separate God from the activity of creation. When Irenaeus states that God is simple, he adheres to certain linguistic parameters in order to specify the extent to which God is one and how this can be understood in conjunction with the various terms used to describe God and his work of creation. For example, God is “all mind, all word, etc.,” but God as mind, word, or light cannot have the same meaning for God as they do for creatures, but can only be understood in relation to God himself. Scholars have recognised the importance of the first and last large sections of theological affirmation in Book 2, the argument for God as creator (*haer.* 2.1–2) and for the unity of scripture (*haer.* 2.26–28), but with the exception of Eric Osborn, this claim of divine simplicity had not been studied by scholars until recently.<sup>43</sup> For now I will summarise how this claim develops the whole argument of Book 2, but will focus exclusively on this particular passage in the next chapter.

Just prior to the appearance of the term *simplex*, in *haer.* 2.12 the argument focuses on ways to rightly speak about God as creator, contrasting the ways his opponents have described God and the work of creation (as described in *haer.*

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made what is from that which was not, according to his power and will (*virtus* and *voluntas*). This theme of the will and power of God continues in *haer.* 2.11.1, where Irenaeus argues that according to the law, prophets, and Lord’s own words, the Father is the maker of the world and that there is no other maker. This leads into an argument that follows the same sequence found in *haer.* 4.20. John Behr calls this affirmation, “a short statement of the true faith—the one God who by his Word created all that is,” and he views *haer.* 2.11 as a summary of the forthcoming argument, promising to (1) question their opinions (in *haer.* 2.12–19) and (2) bring forward the discourses of the Lord (in *haer.* 2.20–28). See Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 85–86. In each of these, Irenaeus asserts the central theme of God as creator alongside other supporting theological claims and short references to scriptural support.

- 43 Since 2019, two chapters and one article have been published which focus on this section and the principle of divine simplicity in Irenaeus. See Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, especially 90–99; Behr, “Synchronic and Diachronic Harmony: St. Irenaeus on Divine Simplicity”; Ip, *Origen of Alexandria and the Emergence of Divine Simplicity before Nicaea*, chapter 4. Prior to these, Eric Osborn had a short discussion on divine intellect, and Jackson Lashier had a few footnotes on divine simplicity, but otherwise, scholarship had been mostly silent. Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 38–43; Eric Osborn, *The Beginning of Christian Philosophy* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981), 38; Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity*, 87–90. For a more complete summary of scholarship, see Chapter 2, n. 1. In works that have methodically walked through *Against Heresies*, neither Rousseau, Donovan, nor Behr note *haer.* 2.12–13 as having any positive affirmation. Rousseau and Doutreleau, *sc* 294, 370; Donovan, *One Right Reading?*, 51–52; Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 87.

2.1–19).<sup>44</sup> In the course of this passage, Irenaeus claims that there are religious, pious, sinful, insufficient, appropriate, possible, and right ways to speak about God. This suggests that he has a gradient scale for better and worse kinds of discourse about God.<sup>45</sup> I have noted two linguistic parameters to which he adheres in his explanation of his definition of divine simplicity (for further discussion, see Chapter 2, section 2). In the first parameter he differentiates between creator and creature, describing two opposite kinds of language. The Father should not be reckoned (*enumerari non debet*) with descriptions of creatures. In the second, he opposes descriptions of God's powers that are mutually exclusive and cannot exist together. In the system of Irenaeus' opponents, the two opposing pairs of Word and Silence and of Light and Darkness were four separate powers emitted from God. Irenaeus argues that neither Word and Silence nor Light and Darkness can exist together, for they are dissimilar (*dissimilis*), and mutually exclusive (*haer.* 2.12.5). Instead, Irenaeus claims that God is only similar to himself, so His powers, such as Mind and Thought, are always united and understood in terms of each other. God's names, powers, and activities cannot be mutually exclusive, but, as he will write in the following section, are "mutually entailing" (*coobaudiuntur* in *haer.* 2.13.9). These two parameters, introduced prior to stating that God is simple, are intertwined through his argument.

Irenaeus' very statement that God is simple draws from the first parameter, that contrasts between language about humans and language about God. First, Irenaeus opposes Stoic psychological language being applied to God (see Chapter 2, section 2.1.2). In theory, humans have a process of thought before they speak. According to Irenaeus, his opponents are applying (*applicant*) this process to God, and thereby assigning (*describentes*) and giving (*donantes*) human affection and passions to God. However, this is not appropriate since there is an essential differentiation between creator and creature. Scriptural language about God, with terms such as spirit, thought, word, etc., should not be understood as a series of divine powers generated one after another (like thoughts leading to words), because God is simple:

However, if they knew the Scriptures and were taught by the truth, they certainly would understand that God is not at all like humans, and "his

44 Irenaeus never clearly distinguishes parameters or rules for speaking about God, but the argument generally follows the definition of divine grammar used by Lewis Ayres in his discussion on the fourth century, where divine grammar is "a set of rules or principles intrinsic to theological discourse, whether or not they are formally articulated." Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 14–15.

45 For discussion on each of these different kinds of discourse about God, see Chapter 2, n. 73.



thoughts are not at all like the thoughts of humans" (Is 55:8). For the Father of All differs greatly from these things which arise from human affect and passions, and [he] is simple, and non-composite, and with similar members, and himself altogether similar and equal to himself, since he is all mind, all spirit, all understanding, all thought, all reason, all hearing, all sight, all light and the entire source of all that is good, in whatever way it is [right] for a religious and pious person to speak about God.

Si autem Scripturas cognouissent et a ueritate docti essent, scirent utique quoniam non sic Deus quemadmodum homines, et *non sic cogitationes eius quomodo cogitationes hominum* (Is 55:8). Multum enim distat omnium Pater ab his quae proueniunt hominibus adfectionibus et passionibus, et simplex et non compositus et similimembrius et totus ipse sibi-metipsi similis et aequalis est, totus cum sit sensus et totus spiritus et totus sensuabilitas et totus ennoia et totus ratio et totus auditus et totus oculus et totus lumen et totus fons omnium bonorum, quemadmodum adest religiosis ac piis dicere de Deo.<sup>46</sup>

While this theological claim is not entirely devoid of scriptural support, it leans more heavily on the philosophical language of theology.<sup>47</sup> The term *simplex* is itself, a philosophical term, and Irenaeus explains this concept with even more philosophical language from Xenophanes, where God is described as all mind, all thought, etc. This way of describing God continues to appear throughout *Against Heresies* (*haer.* 1.12.2; 2.28.4–5, and 4.11.2).<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, he often repeats that God is and acts “himself in/through himself” to argue that God is not separated from powers, but rather God is similar and equal. This same terminology is later applied to his famous description of the activity of God’s Hands, that is, the Word and Wisdom or the Son and Spirit (*haer.* 4.20.1).<sup>49</sup>

46 *haer.* 2.13.3 (SC 294.114–116).

47 Cf. Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 91–92. For further discussion, see Chapter 2, section 1.

48 For discussion and scholarship on Irenaeus’ adaptation of Xenophanes, see Chapter 2, section 1.2.

49 Irenaeus’ Latin translation is the first usage of this phrasing, but it becomes prominent after him. For discussion, see Chapter 5, n. 34. Another example of recurring terminology is his claim that God cannot be known through his greatness but only through his love, a phrasing that appears regularly throughout *Against Heresies*, and which has been called the “heart of Irenaeus’ theology.” This theme first appears in describing the cosmology of his opponents in *haer.* 1.2.2, but is applied to Irenaeus’ theology first here, then in *haer.* 2.17.11, 3.24.2–3, and finally in *haer.* 4.19.20. For discussion, see Chapter 5, section 3.1.

Although the term *simplex* does not regularly reappear in *Against Heresies*, the surrounding terminology used to explain it remains prominent and is further developed in his later descriptions of God.

After introducing the simple God, Irenaeus returns to his parameters for language about God to guide possible meanings of God as “all mind” or “all thought.” First, and in keeping with his argument thus far, language about God cannot ascribe features of composite humans to God. There is a creator/creature differentiation:

He is beyond these [*sensus, spiritus, sensuabilitas, ennoia, lumen* etc.], and on account of this, indescribable. It would be appropriate and right that he be called Mind who contains all things, but not similar to the thinking of humans. It would be most appropriate that he be called Light, but nothing like light according to us. Indeed, in all remaining ways, the Father of all will not be at all similar to the insignificance of humans.

Est autem et super haec, et propter hoc inenarrabilis. Sensus enim capax omnium bene ac recte dicitur, sed non similis hominum sensui; et lumen rectissime dicitur, sed nihil simile ei quod est secundum nos lumini. Sic autem et in reliquis omnibus nulli similis erit omnium Pater hominum pusillitati.<sup>50</sup>

Scriptural terms, such as “word” and “light,” cannot mean the same thing for God that they mean for humans. However, these terms are not entirely devoid of meaning, for some kind of reference point can be drawn from their usage in relation to God himself. God cannot be compared with anything external, but rather, God can only be compared to himself. So, in line with his second linguistic parameter, each description of God must be mutually entailing. Each activity, such as seeing or hearing, or each of God’s powers, such as Word and Mind, entails the other.

Everyone knows this naturally, since it may be logically said about people, but in him who is God over all, since he is all Thought and all Word, in the way we have said above, not having in himself something older, nor younger, nor something other, but remaining all equal and similar and one. Therefore, the emission of this kind of arrangement would not [logically] follow. Just as a person would not sin if he says he [God is] “all sight

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50 *haer.* 2.13.4 (SC 294.116).

and all hearing,” so that, in the way he sees he also hears, and in the way he hears he also sees, so too for the person who said, “all Thought and all Word,” so that in the way he is Thought, in this same way he is Word, and that his Word is this Mind.

Quod quidem omnes uidelicet sciunt, quoniam in hominibus quidem consequenter dicatur; in eo autem qui sit super omnes Deus, totus Nus et totus Logos cum sit, quemadmodum praediximus, et neque aliud antiquius, neque posterius aut aliud alterius habente in se, sed toto aequali et simili et uno perseuerante, iam non talis huius ordinationis sequetur emissio. Quemadmodum qui dicit eum—totum uisionem et totum auditum—in quo autem uidet, in ipso et audit, et in quo audit, in ipso et uidet—non peccat: sic et qui ait, illum totum Sensum et totum Verbum, et in quo Sensus est in hoc et Verbum esse, et Verbum esse eius hunc Nun.<sup>51</sup>

Irenaeus further clarifies the “all Thought and all Word” terminology, arguing that each description should be understood in light of the other. The words describing God can only be understood in relation to God himself. This parameter is labelled in the next paragraph:

... but the names of their powers are always with God, in whatever way it is possible and worthy for humans to hear and speak about God. For Thought, Word, Life, Incorruption, Truth, Wisdom, Good, and all others [powers] are heard together with the name of God.

... sed earum virtutum quae semper sunt cum Deo appellationes sunt, quemadmodum possibile est et dignum hominibus audire et dicere de Deo. Appellationi enim Dei coobaudiuntur sensus et uerbum et uita et incorruptela et ueritas et sapientia et bonitas et omnia talia.<sup>52</sup>

Because God is simple, the names of God and the descriptions of God’s powers are “heard together” (*coobaudiuntur*). This means that God’s names and powers entail each other (as I argue in more detail in Chapter 2, section 2.2.2). This explanation of the concept of divine simplicity clarifies and develops his argument that the one God is the creator and that the many scriptural names and powers refer to this one God. As Book 2 develops, this theme of God’s powers

51 *haer.* 2.13.8 (SC 294.124).

52 *haer.* 2.13.9 (SC 294.126).

and the terminology used to explain divine simplicity remain central to his description of God, and in the final section of theological affirmation (*haer.* 2.25–28), he returns to it in order to explain his view on the unity of scripture.

## 5 God Is Revealed in the Harmony of Scripture (*Haer.* 2.25–28)

In the final large theological claim examined in this chapter, Irenaeus claims that both creation (*haer.* 2.25.2) and scripture (*haer.* 2.28) are harmonious because God is their source.<sup>53</sup> These build on the previous claims of Book 2. God is the one creator (*haer.* 2.1–2), and God cannot be separated from his powers or activity attributed to them because he is simple (*haer.* 2.13), and the harmonious result of this activity, in creation and in scripture, is evidence of the one God as their source (*haer.* 2.27–28). In this last constructive claim, he uses the terminology of divine simplicity, citing Xenophanes to explain the relationship between God and his powers, and he adheres to his parameters for language, differentiating between the kinds of knowledge accessible to the creator and to his creatures. In addition to reaffirming Irenaeus' view on the unity of scripture, I note that his claim regarding the harmony of creation and scripture depends on the view that the simple God is not separated from his powers when creating, since he is not made up of powers as though they were parts.

Irenaeus applies the aesthetic of harmony to various philosophical divisions of knowledge (for example, mathematics and physics) to argue for the unity of creation and scripture.<sup>54</sup> Harmony in creation, seen in the various divisions of knowledge, point to their source. First, Irenaeus challenges his opponents' use of numerology as an organising principle for scripture (*haer.* 2.24), since the way they employ mathematical principles results in a lack of harmony in physics and metaphysics (*haer.* 2.25). In contrast, he claims that created things should be harmonised (*aptare debent*) with the established system of truth (*subjacenti veritatis argumento*), for just as numbers come from a rule (*numeri*

53 Again, there are various shorter theological claims between *haer.* 2.12–13 and 2.25–28, though there seem to be fewer explicit positive claims and they seem to be more closely intertwined with his negative polemic. One example can be found in *haer.* 2.22.3, where Irenaeus walks through Johannine passages chronologically to argue that the Lord's ministry was more than one year.

54 Balthasar, in his section on Irenaeus, briefly explores the aesthetic of harmony in creation due to the work of the creator. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, trans. A. Louth, F. McDonagh, and B. McNeil, vol. II (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 71–73.

*ex regula*), so too created things come from God (*ea quae facta sunt ex Deo*).<sup>55</sup> Irenaeus uses the aesthetic of harmony to claim that “all things were made by God harmonious and beautiful, clearly with great wisdom and care.”<sup>56</sup> Despite the many strings of a lyre or notes in a song, and although there is a difference between notes and intervals, there is one harmonious melody because there is one author. So too, despite differences in creation, it is harmonious, demonstrating a single creator:

There are many and varied things in creation, and they are well ordered and harmonious in relation to the whole creation, though considered individually they are opposed to each other and discordant. By way of illustration, the sound of the harp, though it consists of many and opposite notes, forms one harmonious melody by the intervals between the notes. So, the lover of truth should not be deceived by the interval between the notes; nor should a person suspect one artist and author for the one, another for the other; nor that one arranged the high notes, another the low, and still another those in the middle. No, there is one and the same [author] for displaying the wisdom, the justice, the goodness, and the artistry of the total work. Rather, those who listen to the melody ought to praise and extol the artist; and admire the high pitch of some notes; and pay attention to the low pitch of others; and listen to the middle pitch of still others; and consider the type of some notes and to what each one is related; and find out the reason for each one. But they should never change the rule, or stray from the Artist, or reject the faith in the one God who made all things, or blaspheme our Creator.<sup>57</sup>

Quia autem uaria et multa sunt quae facta sunt, et ad omnem quidem facturam bene aptata et bene consonantia, quantum autem spectat ad unumquodque eorum sunt sibi inuicem contraria et non conuenientia, sicut citharae sonus per uniuscuiusque distantiam consonantem unam melodiam operantur ex multis et contrariis sonis subsistentem. Debet ergo amator ueri non traduci distantia uniuscuiusque soni, neque alium quidem huius, alium autem illius Artificem suspicari et Factorem, neque alium quidem acutiores, alium autem uastiores, alium uero medietates aptasse, sed unum et ipsum, ad totius operis et sapientiae demonstratio-

55 *haer.* 2.25.1 (SC 294.248–250).

56 *haer.* 2.25.1 (SC 294.250). cum magna sapientia et diligentia ad liquidum apta et ornate omnia a Deo facta sunt.

57 Translation adjusted from Unger and Dillon, *ACW* 65, 82–83.

nem et iustitiae et bonitatis et muneris. Hi uero qui audiunt melodiam debent laudare et glorificare Artificem, et aliorum quidem extensionem mirari, aliorum autem laxamentum intendere, aliorum uero inter utrumque temperamentum exaudire, aliorum autem typum considerare et ad quid unumquidque referat, et eorum causam inquirere, nusquam transferentes regulam neque errantes ab Artifice neque abicientes fidem quae est in unum Deum qui fecit omnia neque blasphemantes nostrum Condito-rem.<sup>58</sup>

Here Irenaeus borrows language that is well known in literature and philosophy.<sup>59</sup> He uses this language of harmony to describe the way God creates, arguing that one and the same God is creator. As a result, the harmony of creation reflects the will of God in the plan for creation. This, again, develops the language in the Rule of Truth, where the one God is described as creating different natures (*haer.* 1.10.3 and 1.22.1), and Irenaeus even affirms that God *planned* different kinds of natures (*haer.* 2.2.4). Variation in creation does not require a composite creator, just as variations in music do not require different authors. Rather, the harmony in creation depends on its source being the one creator God, from the rule, whose act of creation did not occur through a separated power, since God is simple.

Second, the causal relationship between the metaphysics and physics in his opponents' system has discordant implications for knowledge (*haer.* 2.28). According to Irenaeus, his opponents argued that unclear portions of scripture

58 *haer.* 2.25.2 (SC 294.252–254).

59 Briggman notes parallels with Homer's *Odyssey*, Pythagorean reasoning on the principle of agreement, Plato's usage of Heraclitus in the *Symposium*, and Philo's *De Cherubim*. He ends by suggesting that Irenaeus had some source containing the writings of Heraclitus due to parallel passages in Hippolytus. See Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit*, 142–145. These selections from both Plato and Philo have several parallels with Irenaeus, particularly since their usage of metaphor seeks to illustrate harmony in the cosmos, with love or the god of love as the binding agent. See *Symp.* 187A–B; *Cher.* 109–112. One could also add ps-Aristotle's description of planetary movement. *Mund.* 399a (LCL 400.394–397). This work seems to have been known by Apuleius and Maximus of Tyre, so it was probably written before 140–180 CE. See E.S. and D.J. Furley Forster, ed., *Aristotle: On Sophistical Refutations. On Coming-to-be and Passing-away. On the Cosmos*, LCL 400 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 340–341. Osborn notes parallels with Plotinus. In *Enn.* 2.9.16, Plotinus argues for a musician who hears harmonious music or a mathematician who sees right relation and proportion in numbers to describe the goodness of creation and the reflection of the forms in this world. Irenaeus' argument has this same consecutive arrangement, as he argues against his opponents' usage of numbers (*haer.* 2.24) alongside the metaphor of music (*haer.* 2.25). Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 63–64.

and unclear portions of the world require an intermediary demiurge, for only a composite creation could come from a composite creator. For Irenaeus, this directly contradicts the view of a simple God. Irenaeus claims that their view of creation assumes disharmony, so their physics affects their metaphysics. Yet, the system of Irenaeus is not threatened by what is not known. The causes for the flooding of the Nile, for the migration of birds, for the tides of the ocean, for storms, or for the waning and waxing of the moon, all remain unknown. While some had speculated on their causes, only God knows the truth (*haer.* 2.28.2). So, Irenaeus delineates two kinds of knowledge: that which remains with God (*adiacent Deo*) and must be commended to God, and that which is revealed by God and becomes part of human knowledge (*nostram scientiam*). The difference between these two kinds of knowledge is founded on the difference between creator and creatures.

\*Therefore, as we have said, if we have devoted some questions to God, then we will protect our faith and we will remain free of danger, and all scripture given to us from God will be found by us to be harmonious, and the parables will be harmonious with the explicit writings, and clear writings will explain the parables, and through this polyphony of styles, one harmonious tune will be heard among us, \*praising with hymns the God who made everything. Likewise, [it is] impure if someone asks: “what did God do before he made the world?” since we would say that response is subject to God. Scripture tells us that the world was made completely (ἀποτελεστικῶς) by God, taking a beginning in time. Scripture does not reveal what was before God’s work. Therefore, this response is subject to God.

\*Si ergo, secundum hunc modum quem diximus, quaedam quidem quaestionum Deo commiserimus, et fidem nostram seruabimus, et sine periculo perseuerabimus, et omnis Scriptura a Deo nobis data consonans nobis inuenietur, et parabolae his quae manifeste dicta sunt consonabunt, et manifeste dicta absoluent parabolas, et per dictionum multas uoces unam consonantem melodiam in nobis sentiet,<sup>60</sup> laudantem hymnis Deum qui fecit omnia.\* Vt puta, si quis interroget: Antequam mundum faceret Deus, quid agebat? dicemus quoniam ista responsio subiacet Deo.

60 Harvey argues that the Latin should not be changed to *sentietur* because αἰσθήσεται (FMI 3s) from αἰσθάνομαι (to perceive, understand) “does not admit this passive signification,” but rather, one should read the Greek as ᾄσθήσεται (FPI 3s) from ᾄδομαι (to sing). See Hv 2.41.4 (1.352), n. 2.

Quoniam autem mundus hic factus est ἀποτελεστικῶς a Deo, temporale initium accipiens, Scripturae nos docent; quid autem ante hoc Deus sit operatus, nulla Scriptura manifestat. Subiacet ergo haec responsio Deo ...

\*Εἰ οὖν καθ' ὃν εἰρήκαμεν τρόπον, ἔνια τῶν ζητημάτων ἀναθήσωμεν τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ τὴν πίστιν ἡμῶν διαφυλάξομεν, καὶ ἀκίνδυνοι διαμενοῦμεν, καὶ πᾶσα γραφὴ δεδομένη ἡμῖν ἀπὸ Θεοῦ σύμφωνος ἡμῖν εὐρεθήσεται, καὶ αἱ παραβολαὶ τοῖς διαρρήθην εἰρημένοις συμφωνήσουσι, καὶ τὰ φανερώς εἰρημένα ἐπιλύσει τὰς παραβολὰς, καὶ διὰ τῆς τῶν λέξεων πολυφωνίας ἔνι σύμφωνον μέλος ἐν ἡμῖν αἰσθήσεται\* ...<sup>61</sup>

Harmony is necessary in mathematics and physics because God is their source, and this is also the case for the interpretation of scripture. God is the source of knowledge because God is the source of scripture and creation. God is eternally teaching (*doceat*) and humans eternally learning (*discat*) through faith, hope, and love (1Cor 13:9–13). Unclear passages of scripture or unanswered questions in creation only highlight the creator/creature differentiation, and not an absence of harmony.

The metaphor of harmony is intertwined with the claim that God is the source of all from the Rule of Truth, though this has implications for theological speculation of divine simplicity. Twice in these passages, Irenaeus refers to the Rule of Truth as the means for understanding the harmony in creation (*haer.* 2.25) and scripture (*haer.* 2.28).<sup>62</sup> As argued by Briggman, this theme of harmony remains important for Irenaeus' description of creation in the rest of *Against Heresies*, both to describe the creative work of Wisdom with harmonising verbs and their cognates (from *aptare* and *consonare*), and also when deploying *consonantia* and *contrarium* to oppose or defend a particular cosmology.<sup>63</sup> The creating work of the simple God continues through the work of perfecting and harmonizing the world. According to Irenaeus, the *clear* parts of scripture describe the one God as the continuous source of creation, so first and foremost, Irenaeus seeks to refute the hidden knowledge of his oppon-

61 *haer.* 2.28.3 (293.276). The sign \* marks the beginning and end of Greek fragment 5, from the *Sacra Parallela*.

62 In *haer.* 2.25.1 (SC 294.250–252), Irenaeus refers to *subjacenti ... argumento*, which Rousseau suggests should be read as τῇ ὑποκειμένη ... ὑποθέσει τῆς ἀληθείας. For discussion, see Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 293, 296–299; Unger and Dillon, ACW 65, 82 and 150 n. 2–3. The Latin of *haer.* 2.28.1 (SC 294.268) demonstrates this more clearly, referring to the *regulam ... veritatem*. Behr describes this section (*haer.* 2.25–28) as devoted to the Rule of Truth. See Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 86.

63 Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit*, 136–139.



ents with the clarity and public truth of scripture.<sup>64</sup> However, he admits that there are unclear parts of scripture just as there are unknown parts in the physical world. According to Irenaeus, his opponents use the unknown parts of the physical world and the unclear parts of scripture to support their cosmology and suggests separation and division in God. Irenaeus argues for a method of scriptural exegesis and natural knowledge that is not disproven by a variety of natures or levels of clarity, but one that depends on and is proven by the harmony and clarity of truth.<sup>65</sup> Scripture is to be read through scripture, with the clear passages explaining the passages that are unclear, and it cannot be read in a way that introduces disharmony because of its source.<sup>66</sup> Thus, all of scripture (prophets and apostles) teaches one creator (*haer.* 2.27.2), and no part of scripture, not even the unclear parables, teach a different creator. Unclear parables do not convey disharmony in scripture, just as unknown aspects of physics do not convey disharmony in the world. For Irenaeus, the harmony of scripture and creation affirm God as their source: the economy (of creation and revelation) informs his knowledge of God, what is today often labelled as “theology proper.” This, however, raises questions regarding theological speculation on what is unknown or unclear.

In this passage Irenaeus introduces four unanswered theological questions: (1) what was God doing before creation (*haer.* 2.28.3); (2) how was the Son emitted by the Father (*haer.* 2.28.6); (3) from what source and how did God produce matter (*haer.* 2.28.7); and (4) what is the cause of the nature of sinners (*haer.* 2.28.7)? Many scholars have come to vastly different conclusions on whether Irenaeus rejects or condones theological speculation,<sup>67</sup> and the two key studies on divine simplicity vary on this point, based on the scholars’

64 For a discussion on the importance of clarity in the argument of Irenaeus, see Ayres, “Irenaeus vs. the Valentinians: Toward a Rethinking of Patristic Exegetical Origins,” especially 178–180.

65 Morlet labels this as the first of two rules introduced for reading scripture. See Sébastien Morlet, *Symphonia: La concorde des textes et des doctrines dans la littérature grecque jusqu’à Origène* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2019), 218.

66 Morlet outlines three principles in Irenaeus’ methods of exegesis, and this is the second. In it, the criterion for right exegesis is the harmony of scripture, and at the same time, right exegesis preserves this harmony, allowing it to be understood. Morlet, *Symphonia*, 220.

67 R.M. Grant, “Irenaeus and Hellenistic Culture,” *HTR* 42, no. 1 (1949); W.C. van Unnik, “Theological Speculation and its Limits,” in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: In Honorem Robert Grant*, ed. W. Schoedel and R. Wilken (Paris: Beauchesne, 1979); Schoedel, “Theological Method in Irenaeus (“Adversus Haereses” 2.25–28).”; Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit*, 134ff; Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 116–120; Anthony Briggman, “Theological Speculation in Irenaeus: Perils and Possibilities,” *VC* 71, no. 2 (2017).

readings of this passage. For example, John Behr argues that these unanswered questions (particularly one and two) mean that, for Irenaeus, “God is not subject to our scrutiny,” so when examining divine simplicity, whatever else it may mean, it does not reveal knowledge about God that is absent from the cross of Christ.<sup>68</sup> Knowledge of God is limited to what is revealed by the Son. On the other hand, Briggman argues that some things are revealed by God through natural revelation, so “causal inquiries into spiritual matters” will sometimes result in knowledge about God, and as a result, speculative knowledge about God approaches certainty.<sup>69</sup> For him, divine simplicity fits in this category. I agree with Briggman, that Irenaeus permits theological speculation, though I would add that this speculation is not through a natural revelation that is separate from scripture. This passage intertwines scripture and natural revelation. While Irenaeus does not answer these questions entirely, certain answers do cease to be options because of the clear portions of scripture and the harmony of scripture.<sup>70</sup> Irenaeus does not reject theological speculation entirely, but it is guarded by the clarity of scripture. When describing God’s powers, he removes certain options from the table when considering descriptions about God, because the concept of the simple God best adheres to description of the one God of scripture and the rule. He rejects separating God from his powers in the activity of creating, he rejects applying language about humans to language about God, and he affirms that God’s names and powers are mutually entailing, all because the clear parts of scripture teach one God as the creator who created through his Word. Thus, he is willing to use extra-biblical language, such as “simple,” because it harmonises with the language of rule and (what he identifies as) a clear reading of scripture, thereby interweaving scriptural and philosophical language.

68 Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 119; Behr, “Synchronic and Diachronic Harmony: St. Irenaeus on Divine Simplicity.”

69 Briggman, “Theological Speculation in Irenaeus: Perils and Possibilities,” 193; Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 102–103.

70 With question two, for example, while scripture does not explain just how the Son was emitted, Irenaeus prohibits certain kinds of descriptions of his generation (applying human metaphors to the generation of God’s powers in *haer.* 2.13.3–4; or describing the generation of God’s powers as “of a different substance” in *haer.* 2.17–18). For question four, while scripture does not explain the cause for the nature of sinners, later in the text, Irenaeus describes humanity’s infancy leading to their inability and unwillingness to resist temptation and receive discipline (*haer.* 4.38.1–3). While a mother is able (μήτηρ δύνανται) to give the infant more solid food, the infant is not able (ἀδυνατεῖ) to retain it. Likewise, at the beginning, humanity was unable to receive perfection, being an infant (οὕτως καὶ ὁ Θεὸς αὐτὸς μὲν οἷός τε ἦν παρασχεῖν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τὸ τέλειον). See SC 100.944–946. Many thanks to Paul Saieg for bringing this latter passage to my attention.

Reading *haer.* 2.28 through the lens of divine simplicity is further justified because this passage uses the same theological terminology and focus on God's powers as *haer.* 2.13:

However, since God is all Mind, all Thought, all active Spirit, and all Light, and always the same and existing similarly, and since it is useful for us to know about God, and since we learn from the Scriptures, then surely affections and divisions of this kind will not properly apply to him. The tongue, since it is material, is not sufficiently swift to serve the human mind since it is spiritual. Thus, our speech is stifled within and is not produced the same as it was conceived in the mind, but [comes out] in parts, and this is how the tongue performs.

But God being all Mind and being all *Logos*, understands what he says, and says what he understands. For Understanding is his *Logos*, and *Logos* is Mind, and the Mind containing all things is himself, Father. Therefore, the person who says "the Mind of God," and gives the Mind its own origin, he declares him [God] to be composite, as if God were one thing and the First Mind<sup>71</sup> something else. It is like going backward from the *Logos*, giving to him the third place of origin from the Father, ignoring his greatness. This person has separated the *Logos* from the Father with a great distance. Indeed, the prophet affirms about him, "His generation, who can describe it." (Is 53:8) By conjecturing his generation from the Father and applying the origin of human words to the Word of God through the language of what was made, you actually know neither human nor divine [things] and are rightly exposed by your own selves.

Deus autem cum sit totus Mens, totus Ratio et totus Spiritus operans et totus Lux et semper idem et similiter existens, sicut et utile est nobis sapere de Deo et sicut ex Scripturis discimus, non iam huiusmodi adfectus et divisiones decenter erga eum subsequuntur. Velocitati enim sensus hominum propter spiritale eius non sufficit lingua deseruire, quippe carnalis existens: unde et intus suffocatur uerbum nostrum et profertur non de semel, sicut conceptum est a sensu, sed per partes, secundum quod lingua subministrare praeualeat.

Deus autem totus existens Mens et totus existens Logos, quod cogitat, hoc et loquitur, et quod loquitur, hoc et cogitat: Cogitatio enim eius

<sup>71</sup> *principalis* is here an adjective, singular, nominative, since *Mens* is feminine. Unger believes this does not apply to the context, but the discussion becomes one of order of origin, so I have retained *principalis*. See Unger and Dillon, *ACW* 65, 156, n. 21.

Logos, et Logos Mens, et omnia concludens Mens, ipse est Pater. Qui ergo dicit Mentem Dei et prolationem propriam Menti donat compositum eum pronuntiat, tamquam aliud quidem sit Deus, aliud autem principalis Mens existens. Similiter autem rursus et de Logo, tertiam prolationem ei a Patre donans, unde et ignorat magnitudinem eius, porro et longe Logon a Deo separauit. Et propheta quidem ait de eo: *Generationem eius quis enarrabit*\*? Vos autem generationem eius ex Patre diuinantes et uerbi hominum per linguam factam prolationem transferentes in Verbum Dei, iuste detegimini a uobis ipsis quod neque humana neque diuina noueritis.<sup>72</sup>

This section echoes the terminology of divine simplicity in four ways: (1) it refers back to the Xenophanes citation of “God is all Mind, all Thought, and all active Spirit, and all Light”; (2) it warns against inappropriately applying “affections and divisions” (*adfectus et divisiones*) to God; (3) it opposes descriptions of God as composite, and instead claims God’s Mind entails God’s Word; and (4) it contrasts the process of human thought and speech with God’s powers, which are always the same and existing similarly (*semper idem et similiter existens*)<sup>73</sup> and containing all (*omnia concludens*). Also, when Irenaeus addresses the second unanswered question, regarding what is unknown regarding divine generation, he is drawing from divine simplicity. He has already partially answered this question in Book 2 by refusing certain possibilities for divine generation in *haer.* 2.17, which is the second time the term *simplex* appears in relation to God (see Chapter 4). Here, Irenaeus joins his arguments regarding the simple God from *haer.* 2.13 and 2.17, affirming that divine generation cannot be compared to the inefficiency of human speech, which adheres to his parameters for language about God. He continues this adherence, for when someone describes God as “all Thought,” if that person means a Mind with a different origin, then that person declares (*pronuntiat*) that God is composite, and they are separating the Word from the Father by using language about humans (*uerbi hominum*) and describing the Word’s begetting through language of matter (*per linguam factam*). Irenaeus again clarifies that the Xenophanes quotation cannot imply a separation that results in a composite God.

<sup>72</sup> *haer.* 2.28.4–5 (SC 294.280–282).

<sup>73</sup> This is a puzzling usage, for Irenaeus often refers to God existing “one and the same” (*unum et eundem*), though in the definition for divine simplicity he does have the references to God as *similimembrius*, so this may be an echo of that kind of usage, which I argue, allows for distinction despite simplicity. However, this particular usage requires more thought.

The terminology and argument from his definition of divine simplicity uphold this argument thread regarding divine generation throughout *haer.* 2.17–28.

Irenaeus' concept of harmony depends on the unity of activity of the one and only,<sup>74</sup> simple God, and in turn, this harmony of creation and scripture substantiates his claim regarding the one God. His claim for the harmony of scripture is inseparably bound to his earlier claims about God. Here, he is weaving the terms and concepts of the simple God into this argument for harmony in creation and scripture. Because God is simple, the unified activity of creation through divine powers is reflected through the harmony of creation. In the system of his opponents, reading a lack of harmony in physics and scripture results in disunity in metaphysics, and thus a composite God. However, for Irenaeus, God is not separated from his powers or the activity of creation, so the harmony of creation reflects the unity of the divine activity of the simple God.

## 6 Conclusion

I have argued that Irenaeus introduces key theological principles in the constructive claims of Book 2 that further specify the language about God in the Rule of Truth. By tracing the flow of Book 2, I have argued that divine simplicity is one of these interwoven and interdependent principles. Thus, in the larger argument of Book 2, divine simplicity is key for understanding, not only its larger argument, but also Irenaeus' conception of the Rule of Truth.

In *haer.* 2.1–2, Irenaeus claims that the one “containing, not contained” God is the creator, and he supports his claim through the key scriptures of his theology of creation. Irenaeus' view of God as the actual creator depends on his view God's oneness, and the extent of this oneness is clarified by stating that God is simple. As will be argued further in Chapter 3, this containment language already depends on the concept of simplicity, particularly in relation to Providence. In *haer.* 2.12–13, Irenaeus explicitly claims that God is simple, and he argues that the names and powers of God are not separated, but are mutually entailing. Lastly, in *haer.* 2.27–28, Irenaeus claims that the harmony in creation and scripture reflect God as their source, and he, therefore, is the source of knowledge. In this final passage, the terminology of divine simplicity is used to describe the unity of God's activity in creation and scripture,

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74 This line of argument is used in the first part of Morlet's chapter on Irenaeus. See Morlet, *Symphonia*, 212–215.

which results in their respective harmony. Together, these constructive claims provide further specificity to the rule's language, that God is the one creator, that God created through his powers, and that God created different kinds of natures. While Book 2 is largely negative polemic, these claims highlight theological principles that remains prominent in the rest of *Against Heresies*. The concept of divine simplicity can be read as a clarification of the description of God in the Rule of Truth, and it is central to the argument of Book 2. Having established that Book 2 can yield constructive theological claims, the following chapters focus on Irenaeus' account of divine simplicity, first in its definition (Chapter 2), and then in its use in the rest of *Against Heresies* (Part 2: Chapters 3–6).

## Definition and Explanation of Divine Simplicity in *Haer.* 2.13

In this chapter I focus on *haer.* 2.13, the passage in which Irenaeus introduces and explains the claim that God is simple. Both he and his opponents share scriptural language of the many names, powers, and activities of God, but through this definition of divine simplicity, he challenges a use of this language that separates God from his power, and he specifies his own view, that the one God is the creator. I argue that in his definition of divine simplicity, Irenaeus introduces terminology and parameters for more appropriate uses of scriptural language about God. In section 1, I focus on the terminology of the definition itself. In his definition of divine simplicity, God is simple, non-composite, similar, and equal to himself; and God is entirely possessing or being each of his powers and names. He uses philosophical terminology, particularly from pre-Socratic and Middle-Platonic metaphysics, to specify his intended meaning of the claim that God is simple. In many ways, portions of his definition are similar to arguments made by authors of various kinds of groups that identified as Christians, which suggest that his definition was part of a larger Christian appropriation. In section 2, I argue that the concept of divine simplicity results in parameters for appropriate language about God. Such parameters preclude speaking of separation within God, and so they rule out ascribing to God qualities that are proper to humans (such as the mental motions that lead to passion from Stoic psychology). Positively, the concept of divine simplicity leads to the assertion that the many scriptural descriptions of God (particularly his names and powers) are “heard together.” These names and powers are not separable individual realities, but they are distinct from one another. I describe them as “mutually entailing,” which means that each of God’s names and powers imply one another without being “identical,” as some scholars claim.<sup>1</sup> In Part 2 of this book, I will go on to argue that Irenaeus develops this terminology and these parameters in the rest of *Against Heresies*.

As noted in the introduction, any exploration into this topic must consider two recent studies. Eric Osborn was the only scholar to explore the absolute

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1 Stead, *Divine Substance*, 188–189; Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 96–97. For further discussion, see section 2.2.2 below.

oneness of the divine intellect before 2019, but he did not explore the implications of simplicity for the theology of Irenaeus.<sup>2</sup> In 2019, both John Behr and Anthony Briggman wrote on Irenaeus and divine simplicity, but they came to divergent conclusions.<sup>3</sup> Behr identifies three possible reasons for introducing divine simplicity, and he prefers the third: either (1) divine simplicity as a result of human speculation apart from biblical revelation, (2) divine simplicity as a grammatical rule for language about God, or (3) divine simplicity as inseparable from the way God is revealed.<sup>4</sup> He calls this third option a synchronic reading of scripture, since otherwise, theology would be logically prior

2 Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, see especially chapter 2, pp. 21–48. Rousseau repeatedly refers to God as “absolue simplicité” in the notes for his translation, first in his summaries of *haer.* 2.13, 2.15–16 and 2.28 then in specific notes to the relevant sections of *haer.* 2.13.4, 8 and 2.17.2. Rousseau and Doutreleau, *SC* 293, 142, 48, 77, 242–243, 50, 67. Fantino mentions God’s simplicity, once in reference to the emission of the Word (tying together the discussion in *haer.* 2.13, 2.17, and 2.28) and once in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit (*haer.* 5.12.2), arguing that for Irenaeus, however one spoke of the Word and Spirit, it could not be in such a way that included parts or separation. See Fantino, *La théologie d’Irénee*, 371–373, 79. Denis Minns shows that Irenaeus’ argument against anthropomorphizing God resulted from the claim that, “God is entirely simple.” For him, this emphasises simultaneity in God. Minns, *Irenaeus*, 41. Bingham studies Eph 4:6, and notes its prevalence in *haer.* 2.13, and he studies Irenaeus’ view of God’s aseity, but he never examines the topic of simplicity. Bingham, “Himself within Himself: The Father and His Hands in Early Christianity”; Bingham, “Christianizing Divine Aseity: Irenaeus Reads John.” Jackson Lashier examines the Trinity in Irenaeus, with several paragraphs and footnotes on divine simplicity, particularly to support his argument regarding Irenaeus’ view on the nature of God and the emission of the Word. See Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity*, 86–90, 132–147. To say Orbe does not discuss something is not without its dangers. The vast amount of his work is aptly represented in the 37 pages of bibliography in Eugenio Romero-Pose, “Bibliografía del P. Antonio Orbe,” in *Pleroma: Salus Carne, Homenaje a Antonio Orbe S. J.*, ed. E. Romero-Pose (Santiago de Compostela: Aldecoa, 1990). I was only able to find simplicity mentioned in passing, but its implications were not explored further. See Antonio Orbe, *Hacia la Primera Teología de la Procesión del Verbo*, 2 vols. (Rome: Universitatis Gregoriana, 1958), 1:127–128; 2:638, 64–66; Antonio Orbe, “San Ireneo y el conocimiento natural de Dios, Parte II,” *Gregorianum* 47, no. 4 (1966): 737–738. The implications of *haer.* 2.13 in Irenaeus’ doctrine of God are explored in the dated work, Johannes Kunze, *Die Gotteslehre des Irenaeus* (Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1891), 36–39. The only other reference to ein einfacher Gott or göttliche Einfachheit that I could find in German scholarship was one brief mention in Yoshifumi Torisu, *Gott und Welt: Eine Untersuchung zur Gotteslehre des Irenäus von Lyon* (Nettetal: Styler Verlag, 1991), 129–130.

3 In addition, an excellent book published by Pui Ip dedicated an entire chapter to Irenaeus, but he mostly follows Briggman. Ip, *Origen of Alexandria and the Emergence of Divine Simplicity before Nicaea*. For a close engagement with his argument, see Chapter 4.

4 Behr, “Synchronic and Diachronic Harmony: St. Irenaeus on Divine Simplicity.” Behr first notes Irenaeus’ concept of divine simplicity in John Behr, *Asceticism and anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 55.



to God's economy, through which God is revealed. Put differently, a "refined theism" would be developed prior to Christology.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, Anthony Briggman organises his most recent book, *God and Christ*, by first examining Irenaeus' "theology proper" and then his "Christology."<sup>6</sup> He concludes that Irenaeus' argument for divine simplicity is without explicit scriptural support, and instead, traces its philosophical background.<sup>7</sup>

I draw parts of these conversations together. On the one hand, I think Behr's three reasons for divine simplicity, particularly two and three, are not mutually exclusive. Divine simplicity places parameters on language (like a grammar) by clarifying what is meant in the Rule of Truth, but it also reflects the language about God in scripture. On the other hand, I disagree with Briggman's claim that the concept of divine simplicity lacks scriptural support, for though Irenaeus does not give a biblical citation as validation in *haer.* 2.13, he does claim that a knowledge of scripture and the truth leads to divine simplicity, and he uses the concept of divine simplicity alongside exegesis in the rest of *Against Heresies*. That is to say, scripture and divine simplicity are interrelated for Irenaeus in much the same way as the scripture and the Rule of Truth are interrelated. While Irenaeus gives preference to the language of scripture, he does not separate his reading of scripture from his knowledge of philosophy, but uses the language of philosophy to specify the meaning of scripture and the rule.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Briggman's examination of philosophical language can be helpful for understanding Irenaeus' view of divine simplicity alongside Behr's concept of the synchronic reading of scripture.

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5 Behr argues against a theology proper that is developed logically prior to Christology, in dialogue with Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 37–43. Osborn concludes, "Irenaeus develops an intricate argument, the influence of which cannot be exaggerated. For, without a refined theism, Christology is a keystone without an arch." Where Behr sees a problem of logical priority, Osborn sees a theological necessity.

6 Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, see especially pp. 90–99.

7 He does, however, claim that the philosophical theology of Book 2 agrees with his scriptural hypothesis and the rule from *haer.* 1.10. Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 103.

8 Apart from Briggman's Chapter 3, on divine generation, *God and Christ* does not trace the influence of divine simplicity on the rest of Irenaeus' theology, though Chapter 5 does build on the basis that, for Irenaeus, Christ is truly God (an argument that starts from theology proper in Chapter 2). Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 127–137.

# 1 *Haer.* 2.13.3–4a: Irenaeus' Definition of Divine Simplicity

In *haer.* 2.13.3, Irenaeus provides his definition of divine simplicity, engaging questions raised by contemporary philosophical and Christian descriptions of God. After providing the text of the definition and summarising its scriptural and philosophical background, I will closely examine the two major parts of Irenaeus' definition (God is simple, non-composite, etc., and God is all Mind, all sight, etc.).

Irenaeus opposes the application of Stoic psychological language to God, language that was used to explore emotions in the human process that moves from thought to speech (see section 2.1.2). Irenaeus opposed applying a long list of consecutive mental activities to God because God is not composite like a human. Irenaeus argues that his opponents are inappropriately applying (*applicant*) to God what is said about humans (*in hominibus capit dici*).<sup>9</sup> This kind of language cannot be used of God, because God is simple:

Indeed, they apply [the process] that leads humans to speak to the Father of All, who they say is unknowable by all, denying that he himself made the world, lest he be considered insignificant, and giving [him] the affections and passions of humans. However, if they knew the Scriptures and were taught by the truth, they would certainly understand that since God is in no way like humans, "his thoughts are not in any way like the thoughts of humans" (Is 55:8). For the Father of All differs greatly from these things from which human affections and passions arise, and [he] is simple, and non-composite, and equally-limbed/self-proportionate,<sup>10</sup> and himself altogether similar and equal to himself, since he is all mind, all spirit, all understanding, all thought, all reason, all hearing, all sight, all light and the entire source of all that is good, in whatever way it is [right] for a religious and pious person to speak about God.

quidem ea quae obueniunt hominibus ad loquendum eos applicant omnium Patri, quem etiam ignotum omnibus dicunt, negantes quidem ipsum mundum fecisse, ut ne quidem pusillus putetur, hominum autem adfectiones et passionem donantes. Si autem Scripturas cognouissent et a ueritate docti essent, scirent utique quoniam non sic Deus quemad-

9 *haer.* 2.13.3 (SC 294.114).

10 See Rousseau's discussion on ὁμοιομελής, particularly relating to Epiphanius's record of Irenaeus' usage of the word δωδεκαμελής in 1.14.9, which allows him to suggest ἀνομοιομελής in 2.17.2. (SC 293.240–242).

modum homines, et *non sic cogitationes eius quomodo cogitationes hominum*. Multum enim distat omnium Pater ab his quae proueniunt hominibus adfectionibus et passionibus, et simplex et non compositus et similimembrius et totus ipse sibimetipsi similis et aequalis est, totus cum sit sensus et totus spiritus et totus sensuabilitas et totus ennoia et totus ratio et totus auditus et totus oculus et totus lumen et totus fons omnium bonorum, quemadmodum adest religiosis ac piis dicere de Deo.<sup>11</sup>

First of all, this definition of divine simplicity is notably without the kind of scriptural support that characterises the style of Books 3–5. Briggman argues that “this definition is not supported by an appeal to scripture,” but instead, “Irenaeus grounds this one on philosophical theology,” which leads him to argue that divine simplicity is a consequence of a natural knowledge of God.<sup>12</sup> Yet, Irenaeus introduces this claim by arguing that the errant systems of his opponents stem from a lack of knowledge of the scriptures and the truth, which suggests that Irenaeus, at least rhetorically, founds this claim on scripture and received teaching.<sup>13</sup> For Irenaeus, divine simplicity expresses the harmony of scripture, and is not constructed absent from it. As argued above, Irenaeus defended his position on creation through explicit scriptural support (*haer.* 2.1–2 in Chapter 1, section 3) and he defends his claim that God is the one creator by pointing to the harmony of scripture (*haer.* 2.27–27 in Chapter 1, section 5). Sandwiched between these is the claim that God is simple, so in the flow of the constructive statements about God in Book 2, divine simplicity emerges from a scriptural argument for the one God as creator. In the general argument of Book 2, divine simplicity is not developed apart from scripture.

For example, he has already challenged his opponents’ exegesis of Johanne language, which applied separated human mental activities, which lead to word production, onto God. According to Irenaeus (in *haer.* 1.1–2), the Valentinians used the language of mental motions (Idea, Mind, Word, Understanding, Will, Wisdom), and labelled each of God’s powers as one of the thirty Aeons within the Pleroma. These were placed into three different layers proximate to or distanced from the Father (the Ogdoad, the Decad, and the Duodecad). One Aeon (Wisdom) departed the Pleroma, and her passion led to the cre-

11 *haer.* 2.13.3 (SC 294.114–116).

12 Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 91–92.

13 This reference to scriptures and the truth once again echoes Irenaeus’ description of the Rule of Truth, and he seems to again be depending on the lineage of its reception. Lewis Ayres shows that, for Irenaeus, Rule of Truth is the result of inherited faith and scripture. See Ayres, “Irenaeus and the ‘Rule of Truth’: A Reconsideration,” 163.

ation of matter outside the power and will of the Pleroma. Irenaeus argued that these scriptural terms neither list the sequential generation of God's powers in the Ogdoad (the highest level of the Pleroma), nor describe a rogue power creating the world. Rather, in Irenaeus' view, John teaches that there is one Father who made the world through the Word (see *haer.* 1.8.5–1.9.3; 2.2.5; 3.11 for examples).<sup>14</sup> While his claim that God is simple, opposing powers such as Mind or Word being separated from God, does not directly cite scriptural evidence (in *haer.* 2.12–13.2), his argument is steeped in this prior exegesis.

On the other hand, there is not specific citation used to support the principle of divine simplicity.<sup>15</sup> The citation of Isaiah 55:8 provides a scriptural reference point for his contrast between God and human psychology when differentiating God from creatures, but this is not a proof-text for the principle of divine simplicity. Robert Grant has suggested that this section may be founded upon 1 Corinthians 12:17 and the body of Christ with many members, but I agree with Briggman that this is inconclusive.<sup>16</sup> Instead of a particular proof-text, the different scriptural passages which are summarised by and which ground the notion of divine simplicity become more apparent as Irenaeus applies this principle to the rest of his theology (see Part 2 of this book).<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the

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- 14 See Harris, "Irenaeus's Engagement with Rhetorical Theory in his Exegesis of the Johanne Prologue in *Adversus Haereses* 1.8.5–1.9.3." The logic of Irenaeus' opponents is understandable in the context of the *logos* in John 1, but Irenaeus argues that their particular application of anthropomorphic language results in anthropopathism. The link between Wisdom and Word which becomes so central for the entirety of *Against Heresies*, though formal usage of "wisdom" from Proverbs 8:22ff is not found until *haer.* 4.20.3 For discussion, see Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit*, 130–131. In *haer.* 1.8.5, Irenaeus praises his opponents for beginning their study of the origin of the universe from John 1, but, as shown by Ayres, he opposes an interpretation that depends on hidden knowledge that contradicts other parts of scripture. Ayres, "Irenaeus vs. the Valentinians: Toward a Rethinking of Patristic Exegetical Origins," 153–187. Once again, as introduced in Chapter 1, section 3, Irenaeus bases his argument, not on a single text, but a synthesis of texts.
- 15 For possible scriptural support for the doctrine itself, see Michel Barnes, "Shining in the Light of your Glory: Finding the simple reading of Scripture," *Modern Theology* 35, no. 3 (2019); Jonathan Platter, "Divine Simplicity and Reading Scripture: Exodus 3:14 and God as Being-Itself," *Scottish Journal of Theology* (2020).
- 16 Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 92, n. 108; R.M. Grant, "Early Christianity and Pre-Socratic Philosophy," in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume*, ed. S. Lieberman (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965), 22. This same reference to 1Cor 12 can be seen in Rousseau, and Grant makes this same assertion in 1995. See R.M. Grant, "Place de Basilide dans la théologie chrétienne ancienne," *Revue d'Etudes Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 25, no. 3 (1995): 212; Rousseau and Doutreleau, *sc* 293, 243–244.
- 17 For example, when considering the activity of God, for Irenaeus, it must be a God who *ipse ab/in/per semetipso* creates and reveals, based on the Law and the Gospel (*haer.* 2.30.9

concept of divine simplicity provides a corrective for his opponent's interpretation of scripture, since Irenaeus uses many of the same scriptural passages that were central to the theology of his opponents.<sup>18</sup> Thus, even if they are not always explicitly referenced, I agree with John Behr, that the synchronic reading of scripture, with the different parts of scripture, "provide the basis and framework for understanding divine simplicity in all its dimensions."<sup>19</sup> However, Irenaeus derives the terminology of divine simplicity from philosophy and literature, not from scripture. Irenaeus was handling the intersection between a scriptural network and philosophical language.

By the time of Irenaeus, describing God as simple was common in philosophy, particularly within Platonism. Plato employs the concept of the indivisible Being vs. becoming as a cause of the cosmos in the *Timaeus*, but he uses the term ἀπλῶς when he joins "simple" and "without parts" in *Parmenides*, and he employs simplicity in contrast to the gods of Homer and Aeschylus in the *Republic*.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Irenaeus uses both *simplex* and *non-compositus*, and he argues that the simple God is unlike the God of his opponents, whose multipli-

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and *haer.* 4.20), and this is the same divine activity that entails God's power, namely God's Word and Wisdom (see Chapter 5 section 2, or Chapter 6, section 2.1). The titles "Lord" and "God" from the Septuagint entail both Father and Son, which develops Irenaeus' claim that because God is simple, his titles are mutually entailing (*haer.* 2.13.9), and his scriptural basis is revealed in *haer.* 3.6 (see Chapter 6, section 3). In his discussion on the generation of the *Logos* (*haer.* 2.28.4–7), which elsewhere he calls simple (*haer.* 2.17.2), he first does a literary throwing up of hands, asking "who can know it?" from Isaiah 53:8, and refers to the knowledge of God in terms of heights and depths (Eph 3:19; Rom 11:33; 1 Cor 2:10). However, he then challenges the Valentinian concept of their exclusive, but complete, knowledge, and he claims that if there are things that even the Son does not know (Matt 24:36; Jn 14:28), then certainly, everyone else will only know in part (1 Cor 13:9).

18 Stephen Presly argues that, though a scriptural passage may be at work in the background of Irenaeus' argument, sometimes he does not cite it because it is being misinterpreted by his opponents. See Stephen Presley, "Irenaeus and the Exegetical Roots of Trinitarian Theology," in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, and Legacy*, ed. P. Foster and S. Parvis (2012). He builds upon Slusser's work. Michael Slusser, "The Exegetical Roots of Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 49 (1988).

19 Behr, "Synchronic and Diachronic Harmony: St. Irenaeus on Divine Simplicity," 437. Rather than a single scriptural passage to support his doctrine of Simplicity, it is supported by all the stones of scripture, with, as Behr states, "all the diachronic and synchronic diversity that this entails." Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 10.

20 *Tim.* 28a–30b; 35a–b; *Parm.* 137c–138a; *Rep.* 11.380d–383c. Ip argues that the usage of ἀπλῶς in the *Republic* is the real starting point for discussions on divine simplicity. See Chapter 1 in Ip, *Origen of Alexandria and the Emergence of Divine Simplicity before Nicaea*. Gavriluk points farther back, to Anaxagoras as cited by Aristotle. Paul Gavriluk, "Plotinus on Divine Simplicity," *Modern Theology* 35, no. 3 (2019): 443–444.

city is derived from the Greek myths (*haer.* 1.9.4; 1.12.2; 2.14.2; 2.22.6).<sup>21</sup> He also explains his definition of divine simplicity with a citation from the pre-Socratic philosopher, Xenophanes. Irenaeus engages with this pre-Socratic and Socratic terminology in a way that is similar to Middle Platonic handbooks and doxographies, which may have been what Irenaeus actually used.<sup>22</sup> It is clear that Irenaeus is using and referencing philosophy here, because he even claims that philosophers are more “religious and pious” in their speech about God than his opponents (*haer.* 2.13.3), the same adjectives used to describe Plato’s description of God’s goodness alongside a citation of *Laws* and the *Timaeus*.<sup>23</sup> Immediately after his definition of simplicity, he claims that his opponents shuffle classical and philosophical texts to support their views, and he lists fifteen different poets and philosophers they used (*haer.* 2.14).<sup>24</sup> This suggests that he was consciously engaging with terminology and debates in philosophy while developing his notion of divine simplicity.

Within the philosophical tradition, approaches to divine simplicity varied significantly. After the Socratic dialogues, Aristotle’s famous descriptions of simplicity as actuality rather than potentiality (*Met.* 12.7; 1072b) or Mind thinking itself (*Met.* 12.9; 1074b) undergird his description of his Prime Mover.<sup>25</sup> In

21 For a close examination of Plato’s *Republic* and *Parmenides* and its influence on the discussion of divine simplicity for later generations, see Chapter 1 in Ip, *Origen of Alexandria and the Emergence of Divine Simplicity before Nicaea*.

22 For a summary of the debate on Irenaeus’ philosophical knowledge, ranging from access to a doxography to rhetorical or philosophical training, see Briggman, “Revisiting Irenaeus’ Philosophical Acumen.”; Briggman, “Literary and Rhetorical Theory in Irenaeus Part 1,” 10–32; Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*.

23 *haer.* 3.25.5 (SC 211.484). *Quibus religiosior Plato ostenditur, qui eundem Deum et iustum et bonum confessus est, habentem potestatem omnium, ipsum facientem iudicium*, followed by citations from *Laws.* 4.717E and *Tim.* 3.29E. Osborn argues that this is a claim of popular piety. See Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 37. Ip calls this preservation of divine goodness as the first of two laws of theological speech in Plato. See Ip, *Origen of Alexandria and the Emergence of Divine Simplicity before Nicaea*, 22.

24 *haer.* 2.14.1–6. The list includes literary and philosophical authors, founders of movements and the movements themselves: Antiphanes, Athenaeus, Thales of Miletus, Homer, Anaximander, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Plato, Epicurus, Empedocles, Hesiod, Aristotle, Stoics, Cynics, and Pythagoreans.

25 In the context of thought, “substance stands first, and of substance that which is simple and exists actually. (The one and the simple are not the same; for one signifies a measure, whereas “simple” means that the subject itself is in a certain state.)” καὶ ταύτης ἡ οὐσία πρώτη, καὶ ταύτης ἡ ἀπλή καὶ κατ’ ἐνέργειαν (ἔστι δὲ τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ ἀπλοῦν οὐ τὸ αὐτό· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐν μέτρον σημαίνει, τὸ δὲ ἀπλοῦν πῶς ἔχον αὐτό), *Met.* 12.7; 1072b (LCL 287.146–147). Translation from Hugh Tredennick and G. Cyril Armstrong, eds., *Aristotle: Metaphysics. Oeconomica. Magna Moralia*, LCL 287 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935). For the influence of Aristotle upon Christian discourse about God, see David Bradshaw,

those who engaged Stoicism, such as Cicero and Seneca, language of the simple and uncompounded is applied to the soul, as Irenaeus does in Book 5.<sup>26</sup> Philo refers to God as uncompounded and One, and whose nature is simple (ὁ θεὸς οὐ σύγκριμα, φύσις ὧν ἀπλή) when discussing the harmony of the mixture in the compound nature of humans.<sup>27</sup> In his summary of Plato's teaching, Alcinous does not use the term ἀπλῶς of God, but he employs a string of terms about God, as "eternal, ineffable, self-perfect, ever-perfect and all-perfect; divinity, essentiality, truth, commensurability, good," and claims that these terms are not parts of who God is but rather a single thing that describes God.<sup>28</sup> In his study of divine simplicity, Pui Ip notes that, in Alcinous and Philo, there is a development from the Socratic usage of simplicity, for they specifically describe the simple God as the First Principle, and Philo applies this language to a monotheistic description of God in the Septuagint and to the generation of the *Logos*.<sup>29</sup> Apuleius, also summarising Plato, argues that the three principles are God, Matter, and the Forms; and while God is described as One (*unus*), the Forms are described as primary and simple (*simplices*). The Latin of Apuleius provides

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*Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004).

- 26 Seneca describes First Principles as simple in *ep.* 65.12. This is within an argument that emphasises that form and matter are primary causes, just as matter is, but causes are necessarily simple. Within the structure of argument for Seneca and Cicero, the emphasis is mostly on the soul as without parts and simple. See, for example, Cicero, *Tusc.*, 1.25–29 and Seneca, *ep.* 66.12. In *haer.* 5.7.1, Irenaeus describes the incorporeal soul and the simple spirit. For a discussion of this passage, see Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 159–162.
- 27 Philo, *Mut.* 184 (LCL 275.236–237). F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker, eds., *Philo: On Flight and Finding. On the Change of Names. On Dreams.*, LCL 275 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934). Many thanks to Dr. David Litwa for pointing this out to me.
- 28 He uses the term ἀπλῶς (6.10, 25.4; 32.7), but not as a description of divine. *Didask.* 32.7 does describe those things that are absolutely or simply good (τῶν ἀπλῶς ἀγαθῶν), which could be understood as derivatively referring to the One, but this unlikely. For the string of terms describing God, see *Didask.* 10.3. English translation from John Dillon, ed., *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 18. According to Dillon, there is no clear antecedent that strings together these three references to God's perfection. "The primary god, then, is eternal, ineffable, 'self-perfect,' 'ever-perfect' and 'all-perfect' [italics added]; divinity, essentiality, truth, commensurability, good. I am not listing these terms as being distinct from one another, but on the assumption that one single thing is being denoted by all of them. He is Good because he benefits all things according to their capacities, being the cause of all good." Καὶ μὴν ὁ πρῶτος θεὸς αἰδιός ἐστιν, ἄρρητος, αὐτοτελὴς τουτέστιν ἀπροσδεής, ἀειτελής τουτέστιν αἰεὶ τέλειος, παντελής τουτέστι πάντη τέλειος· θειότης, οὐσιότης, ἀλήθεια, συμμετρία, ἀγαθόν. Λέγω δὲ οὐχ ὡς χωρίζων ταῦτα, ἀλλ' ὡς κατὰ πάντα ἐνὸς νοουμένου. Καὶ ἀγαθὸν μὲν ἐστί, διότι πάντα εἰς δύναμιν εὐεργετεῖ, παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ αἴτιος ὢν.
- 29 See Chapter 2 in Ip, *Origen of Alexandria and the Emergence of Divine Simplicity before Nicaea*, 32–49.

helpful parallels for the Latin of Irenaeus' text, for he too seemed to struggle when translating the concept of the Form as always equal and similar to itself (*semper et eodem modo et sui par ac similis invenitur, ut quae vere si*).<sup>30</sup> Irenaeus uses language central to these philosophical debates, but he also intertwines this philosophical terminology with language of scripture in his argument of divine simplicity.

### 1.1 Simplex, Non Compositus, Similimembris

Three terms form the foundation of Irenaeus' definition for a simple God: *simplex*, *non compositus*, and *similimembris*. The term *simplex* in relation to God appears only twice in *Against Heresies*: first in this definition (*haer.* 2.13.3), where it describes God in himself, and second to describe the simple generation of the *Logos* (*haer.* 2.17.2). The term itself, and the wider context of the definition in *haer.* 2.13.3, suggest Irenaeus has a single and simple unity in mind, rather than a complex unity. God is *simplex*, so he is not composed of parts and cannot be separated or divided. This concept persists, even if the term *simplex* is not deployed. For example, though the term *simplex* does not appear in *haer.* 1.12.2, he does support the view that God's will is not separated from what God does with the same citation of Xenophanes used to explain divine simplicity, "as soon as he willed he completed what he willed ... since he is all thought, all will, all mind ..." <sup>31</sup> Although the term itself, *simplex*, is not present in *haer.* 1.12, the secondary language of God as *totus* thought, will, mind, etc., which accompany his definition of *simplex*, is present. The principle of divine simplicity is operating within his claim that God is not separated from his powers. The other parts of his definition and explanation (i.e. God as equal and similar, or God as

30 Apuleius, *De dog. Plat.* 1.5–6 (Fowler, 246–248). Ryan C. Fowler, ed., *Imperial Plato: Albinus, Maximus, Apuleius* (Zurich: Parmenides Publishing, 2016), 151–160, 246–248.

31 *haer.* 1.12.2 (SC 264.182–184). Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 264. For discussion, see Chapter 3, section 4. "He is the God of the universe: who, as soon as he thought he completed what he thought, and as soon as he willed he completed what he willed; and as soon as he wills, he thinks that which he has willed; thus thinking when he wills, and willing when he thinks, since he is all thought, all will, all mind, all light, all eye, all ear, and the entire font of all good."

"ἡ περὶ τοῦ τῶν ὅλων δεσπότου· ὃς ἅμα τῷ ἐννοηθῆναι καὶ ἐπιτετέλεκε τοῦθ' ὅπερ ἐνενοήθη, καὶ ἅμα τῷ θελῆσαι καὶ ἐννοεῖται τοῦθ' ὅπερ [καί] ἠθέλησεν, τότε ἐννοούμενος ὅτε θέλει, καὶ τότε θέλων, ὅτε ἐννοεῖται, ὅλος ἐννοία ὢν, ὅλος θέλημα [ὢν], ὅλος νοῦς, [ὅλος φῶς Eriphan.] ὅλος ὀφθαλμός, ὅλος ἀκοή, ὅλος πηγὴ πάντων τῶν ἀγαθῶν."

"eius qui est universorum Dominus: qui simul ut cogitavit perfecit id quod cogitavit, et simul ac uoluit et cogitat hoc quod uoluit, tunc cogitans cum uult et tunc uolens cum cogitat, cum sit totus cogitatus et totus sensus et totus oculus et totus auditus et totus fons omnium bonorum."



all Mind, all Reason, etc.) continue to appear regularly in the rest of *Against Heresies*, even in the absence of the term *simplex*. They depend on and develop the claim that God is simple.

Irenaeus is not alone within diverse “Christian” groups in the appropriation of this term. Basilides, a named opponent of Irenaeus, describes Aristotle’s “thinking of thinking” One who existed before anything simple or uncompounded, and claims that language cannot be ascribed to God, a claim which seems to include the language of simplicity.<sup>32</sup> In a creed-like fragment from Irenaeus’ home region of Asia Minor, attributed to Melito of Sardis, the divinity and humanity of Christ in the Incarnation is described as, “clothed in flesh while not constraining the simplicity (ἀπλότητα) of his divinity.”<sup>33</sup> Ptolemy, Tatian, and Clement also provide helpful parallels to Irenaeus’ use. In the *Letter to Flora*, Ptolemy (who was opposed by Irenaeus and described as a follower of Valentinus) describes the unbegotten Father as “incorruption and self-existent light, simple (ἀπλοῦν) and singular” and of a different substance from the creator.<sup>34</sup> Though both Irenaeus and Ptolemy challenge the separation in a Mar-

32 Ref. 7.21.1. “So when there was nothing—not matter, not substance, not nonsubstance, not anything simple or uncompounded (οὐχ ἀπλοῦν, οὐκ ἀσύνθετον), or inconceivable, or imperceptible, neither human, nor angel, nor god, nor anything at all of phenomena named or perceived or thought, a nothingness still more subtle than anything simple described by language (ἀλλ’ οὕτω καὶ ἔτι λεπτομερ(εστέρ)ως πάντων ἀπλῶς περιγεγραμμένων)—then the nonexistent God (whom Aristotle calls “thinking of thinking,” and what these people call “Nonexistent”) wanted to make the world without conception, without perception, without will, without volition, without emotion, and without desire.” I have adapted the translation, and used the Greek, from M. David Litwa, ed., *Refutation of All Heresies* (Williston, VT: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016), 508–509. For discussion, see Orbe, *Hacia la Primera Teología de la Procesión del Verbo*, 9–11.

33 fr. 14. Hall, *Melito of Sardis: On Pascha and Fragments*, 81–82. Syriac and reconstructed Greek from Rucker, *Florilegium Edessenum Anonumum*, 14–15.

“βρέφος ὁρώμενος (?ὀφθεῖς) καὶ τὴν αἰδιότητα τῆς αὐτοῦ φύσεως οὐ ψευδόμενος—//σῶμα (σάρκα) περιβληθεὶς καὶ τὴν ἀπλότητα τῆς αὐτοῦ θε(ι)ότητος οὐκ ἐγκλείσας”

“... appearing as a child, whilst not falsifying the eternity of his nature, //clothed in flesh whilst not constraining the simplicity of his divinity ...”

For a discussion on the authorship, see Jordan, *Armenische Irenaeusfragmente mit deutscher Übersetzung nach Dr. W. Lüdtke*, 56–60. For more recent discussion on the source of these references, see Stewart, *Melito of Sardis: On Pascha, with the Fragments of Melito and other material related to the Quartodecimans*, 96–98.

34 ep. 7.7–8 (SC 24.72). ἀφθαρσία τε καὶ φῶς αὐτόν, ἀπλοῦν τε καὶ μονοειδές. In opposing a Marcionite dualism, Ptolemy appeals to a tripartite view of the Law (lower law of the elders, middle law of Moses, and higher law of God in Matthew 5 and Paul) that stems from a tripartite view of metaphysics (the lower adversary, the middle demiurge, and the higher Father). In his argument for a simple God who is “containing, not contained,” Irenaeus addresses the specific verses raised by Ptolemy in *Letter to Flora*, particularly in defence of

cionite conception of the law alongside descriptions of a simple God, they part ways when it comes to creation, since, for Ptolemy, “the act of creating is discordant with the nature of the first God,” while, for Irenaeus, the act of creating must be attributed to God himself, which is precisely the reason he introduces divine simplicity.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, in the *Oration*, Tatian, another named opponent of Irenaeus, describes the Word as springing forth from God’s will of simplicity (ἀπλότης) like light or fire that is not diminished, which is similar to Irenaeus’ discussion of the emission of the Word as a simple and singular, and comparable to a light or a torch (*haer.* 2.17).<sup>36</sup> Irenaeus engages the language of both of these authors in his argument for divine simplicity (for further discussion, see Chapter 4, section 1), but he develops beyond them by explaining his version of simplicity. Furthermore, as Andrew Radde-Gallwitz has noted, Ptolemy used divine simplicity to argue that there is no contradiction among divine attributes and activities, and while Irenaeus also opposes contraries in simplicity, he is not willing to separate the simple Father from the activity of the creator.<sup>37</sup> After Irenaeus, in the third century, Clement of Alexandria used the principle of divine simplicity in a radical apophaticism where little, if anything, could be known about God.<sup>38</sup> Unlike Clement, Irenaeus remains committed to a knowable God against his opponent’s claim that God is unknown.

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the Mosaic Law. In the *Letter to Flora*, Ptolemy walks through the words of the Lord from various Gospels, the preface to the Gospel of John, and the words of Paul. In Irenaeus’ argument for his God who is creator in *haer.* 2.2.5, Irenaeus defends his view explicitly referring to the words of John and Paul, he references the words of the Lord, and he cites the same Jn 1:3 verse found in *ep.* 3.6. Furthermore, in *haer.* 4.2.3, 6–7, he cites Jn 5:46–47 to argue that those who reject Moses also reject the Son of God.

35 Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Transformation of Divine Simplicity* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), 35.

36 *orat.* 5. Both Tatian and Irenaeus seem to be drawing from Justin in *dial.* 128.2–5. However, in Chapter 4 I argue that while Tatian denies a *logos* with an independent existence, this position is not adopted by Irenaeus. See Matthew Crawford, “The *problemata* of Tatian: Recovering the fragments of a second-century Christian Intellectual,” *JCS* 67, 2 (2016): 553–554. Tatian’s *orat.* 5.1 states, θελήματι δὲ τῆς ἀπλότητος αὐτοῦ προπηδᾷ λόγος. See Whitaker, *Tatian: Oratio ad Graecos and fragments*, 10–11.

37 Radde-Gallwitz, *Transformation of Divine Simplicity*, 19–37.

38 Radde-Gallwitz, *Transformation of Divine Simplicity*, 38–58. Clement differentiates between knowledge and faith, the latter being required to understand what is indemonstrable, namely, that which is simple (ἀπλοῦν). *str.* 2.4.14 (GSC 2.120). Otto Stählin, ed., *Clemens Alexandrinus: Stromata Buch I–VI*, GSC 2 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906). In *str.* 8.3.7.1 (GSC:17.83) he states, “In point of fact, the philosophers admit that the first principles of all things are indemonstrable. So that if there is demonstration at all, there is an absolute necessity that there be something that is self-evident, which is called primary and indemonstrable. Consequently, all demonstration is traced up to indemonstrable faith.” αὐτίκα οἱ φιλόσοφοι ἀναποδείκτους ὁμολογοῦσι τὰς τῶν ὄλων ἀρχάς. ὥστ’ εἴπερ ἐστὶν ἀπόδειξις,

Because Irenaeus' explanation of *simplex* is so different from these other appropriations, I am not arguing for a particular source or lineage in his usage, but rather, for his involvement in a general thought-world. In the context of second-century debates, the presence of the term *simplex* in his writing reflects a knowledge of contemporary Christian debates in descriptions of divine generation, will, activity, names, and powers. Irenaeus addresses the second-century question of non-contradiction as it relates to creation, questions raised by Ptolemy, but he does not settle into the apophaticism that characterised his reader, Clement of Alexandria. His appropriation of divine simplicity primarily opposes a God who is seen as separated from the powers that caused creation, but it also retains distinction, reflecting the variety found in scriptural names of God and in descriptions of activity through His powers.

A God who is *simplex* is therefore *non compositus*. Both of these terms preclude division, parts, or separate beings within God.<sup>39</sup> Language of unmixed unity is found in the writings of the apologist Athenagoras, who also opposes the concept of a creator apart from God, or of a God who is made up of various gods or parts, since God is without parts (οὐκ ἄρα συνεστὼς ἐκ μερῶν).<sup>40</sup> However, Irenaeus develops this "God without parts" language by including the term "simple" and explaining it both with language of "all/whole." In doing so, Irenaeus participates in a particular philosophical tradition.

Philosophers in the Platonic tradition rejected the notion that the divine could be partial: in this line of thinking, wholeness and perfection are associated. Philosophers, however, were also often careful not to identify God with wholeness, since that would limit God to one pole of a human dichotomy or limit him to a particular attribute (e.g. Plato, *Parm.* 137c, 138a; Alcinous, *Didask.* 10.4).<sup>41</sup> This kind of philosophy aligns with a form of apophaticism like that

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ἀνάγκη πᾶσα πρότερον εἶναι τι πιστὸν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ, ὃ δὴ πρῶτον καὶ ἀναπόδεικτον λέγεται. ἐπὶ τὴν ἀναπόδεικτον ἄρα πίστιν ἡ πᾶσα ἀπόδειξις ἀνάγεται. English translation from ANF (12.494). Osborn suggests that *str.* 8 should be considered Clement's "logic notebook," where he blends Aristotle and Stoicism to present his philosophical optimism. Thus, what is simple is, in some senses indemonstrable, nonetheless, logic should be used to find the meaning of scripture to receive knowledge of God. For further discussion on *str.* 8, see Eric Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 206–207 and n. 15.

39 The Greek parallel could perhaps be οὐ μέρος, ἀμερῶς, and/or οὐ σύνθετος. It must be noted that while the Latin only has *non compositus* a single time in Irenaeus' text (and only appears four times before the 6th century), *incompositus/a/um* (as ἀναρίθμητον in *haer.* 1.18.1; 4.4.2; and 5.7.1), appears in key places, as does a contrast between the God of Irenaeus and that of his opponents, the latter which are invariably described as *compositum* throughout Book 2 (*haer.* 2.2.4; 2.13.3; 2.17.7; 2.28.4–5).

40 *leg.* 8.3 (SC 379.94).

41 Dillon argues that, for Plato and Middle Platonic thought, this contrast between God being

of Clement of Alexandria, who appropriates this rejection of the category of “whole” in his description of simplicity, speaking of a God who is neither whole (ὅλον) nor with parts (μέρη), for if God is the Father of the “whole” or “entire,” then he ought not be described by the quality “whole.”<sup>42</sup> This move in Clement guarantees God’s absolute distinction from creation.

Irenaeus has a similar concern to preserve God’s control of and distinction from creation, and it is in that context that we should understand his claim that God is “whole” mind and also without parts. Indeed, in appropriating Xenophanes, where God is described as “whole” or “entire” in relation to several different categories, Irenaeus is following the logic of the Platonic tradition: divine “wholeness” overflows rather than being a constraint. The claims about “wholeness” should not be understood as a preference for one pole of a dichotomy over another. For one thing, Irenaeus has already rejected the possibility that contraries coexist in God (he rejects contrary powers in God in *haer.* 2.12; for further discussion see section 2.2.1 below). Instead, Irenaeus follows the philosophical precedent of other authors who used Xenophanes’ concept of “wholeness” to set God beyond human categories while also displaying absolute, and absolutely effective, powers. Jaap Mansfeld has traced this language of contraries in the philosophical tradition. While Pythagorean dualism arranged lists of contraries for God, in contrast, Xenophanes described God as beyond these polar qualities. Most philosophers followed the Pythagorean system until Eudorus of Alexandria, who once again described the One as beyond these contraries.<sup>43</sup> Irenaeus similarly rejects the language of contraries in the one God by adopting the Xenophanean language of “all” or “whole” (for further discus-

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neither “part” nor “whole” belongs in the context of three epithets (neither part-whole, same-different, motive-mobile), and they are seeking to show that God is beyond attributes. Dillon, *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism*, 108. In Plato’s *Parmenides*, the simple God is not with parts (οὔτε μέρος) nor without parts (οὔτε ἀμεροῦς), and the *Didaskalos* states that “he is not a part (μέρος) of anything, nor is he in the position of being a whole (ὅλον) which has parts (μέρη).” See *Parm* 137c, 138a (LCL 167.236, 38); *Didask.* 10.4 (Whittaker, 22–25). J. Whittaker, ed., *Alcinoos Enseignements des Doctrines de Platon* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990). English translation from Dillon, *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism*, 18. See also G.R. Boys-Stones, *Platonist Philosophy: 80 BC to AD 250* (Cambridge: CUP, 2017), 6A, 169–171.

<sup>42</sup> *str.* 5.12.81 (GSC 2.380).

<sup>43</sup> He points to the citation of Eudorus in Simplicius, *Phys.* 181. See J. Mansfeld, “Compatible Alternatives: Middle Platonist Theology and the Xenophanes Reception,” in *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. R. van den Broek, T. Baarda, and J. Mansfeld (Leiden: Brill, 1988). Mansfeld argues that he was attempting to manoeuvre these pairs of opposites much like later Christians used the *viae negationis*, *analogiae*, and *eminentiae*, including Irenaeus. I am grateful to Pui Ip for bringing this chapter to my attention.

sion on Irenaeus' usage of "all" language, see section 1.2 below). For Irenaeus, in whatever way one understands God as "all" in relation to his powers, it cannot be as a composite unity.

Finally, the term *similimembrius*<sup>44</sup> is further explained with the following phrase, "and himself altogether similar and equal to himself."<sup>45</sup> This terminology conveys that there is distinction in unity (the term *similis* requires more than one thing), which initially may seem in tension with describing God as *simplex*. However, for Irenaeus, "simple" does not deny distinction, but rather, in accordance with the "containing" God, functions like a net by acknowledging interrelation. As such, Irenaeus is acknowledging a philosophical tradition that denied that God is subject to external measurement of categories or comparison with contraries, such as "part-whole" or "same-different," found in creation.<sup>46</sup> Rather than following Middle Platonism, Irenaeus reflects Eleatic theo-

44 The term *similimembrius* has caused some difficulty, as it does not exist elsewhere. Harvey concludes that Grabe's backtranslation of ὁμοιομερής is much more likely than Feuardent's ὁμοιόλωλος. As evidence, he references Aristotle's usage of ὁμοιομερής in *de Part. An.* and *de Caelo*, and shows that the translator of Anaxagoras, Lucretius, could not translate ὁμοιομερής into a single Latin term. Harvey connects Irenaeus' usage of *similimembrius* in "He is a simple, uncompounded Being, *without diverse members*" with ὁμοιόκωλος/ὁμοιομερής, a term coined by Anaxagoras to express the one Supreme Intellect, the only simple, unmixed substance. Another option is ὁμοιομελής, a Greek term not found apart from the fourth century writings of ps-Macarius. Rousseau notes the usage by Macarius, in his homilies, but in both cases (1 and 32), it is in reference to the soul (SC 293.241). Harvey also notes the similarity between Irenaeus and Cyril of Jerusalem in *cat.* 6.7, where he states, ὅμοιον αἰεὶ ἑαυτῷ ὄντα ... Οὐκ ἐν μέρει πλέον ἔχων, καὶ ἐν μέρει ἐλαττοῦμενος· ἀλλ' ἐν πᾶσιν ὅμοιος ὢν αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ. See note 2 in Hv 2.15.3 (1.282). In the context of the of *cat.* 6.7, it seems undoubtable that Cyril is here citing Irenaeus. Rousseau notes that in *haer.* 2.17.2, where "simple" is used again to describe the generation of the creative powers, the translation for *dissimiles membris suis* is ἀναμοιομελεῖς. See Rousseau for discussion on Greek reconstruction. Connections to Plato's *Parm.* 137, Aristotle's *Met* 14.1, and the Middle Platonic *Didask.* 10.7 are, in my opinion, inconclusive. Harvey, *Santi Irenaei episcopi Lugdunensis libros quinque adversus haereses*, 1:282 n. 2, 1:90–91 n. 2; Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 293, 241–242. Schoedel also points to *Orac Sib* 8.284–285 as a parallel in Schoedel, "Enclosing, not Enclosed: The early Doctrine of God," 78, n. 19. Regardless of the precise Greek term or its source, the theme of similarity remains central to Irenaeus' discussion of God's powers.

45 *haer.* 2.13.3 (SC 294.114) *et simplex et non compositus et similimembrius et totus ipse sibimet-ipsi similis et aequalis est.*

46 For an early and influential statement regarding contraries, see *Parm.* 140d (LCL 167.246). "The [One] will partake neither of one measure, nor of many, nor of few; nor will it partake at all of the same, nor will it ever, apparently, be equal to itself or to anything else; nor will it be greater or less than itself or another." Οὐτε ἄρα ἐνὸς μέτρου μετέχον οὔτε πολλῶν οὔτε ὀλίγων, οὔτε τὸ παράπαν τοῦ αὐτοῦ μετέχον, οὔτε ἑαυτῷ ποτε, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἔσται ἴσον οὔτε ἄλλῳ· οὔτε αὖ μείζον οὔδ' ἑλαττον οὔτε ἑαυτοῦ οὔτε ἐτέρου. As noted above, the One transcended

logy in his usage of *totus ipse sibimet similis*, particularly Xenophanes and his student Parmenides, who described the One as similar to himself.<sup>47</sup> Yet this claim that God is similar to himself retains distinction in unity, as his ongoing use of the terms *similis* and *aequalis* suggests (see *haer.* 1.1.1; 2.7.3; 2.13.8; 2.17.2; 2.25.3; 3.25.4; 4.11.2).<sup>48</sup> Irenaeus describes God as “himself totally similar and equal to himself” and God’s powers as existing similarly. This language of similarity allows for distinction within a unified activity of God. For Irenaeus, God is simple and non-composite, but he also entirely is or has his powers, so while God cannot be understood by measurement or through contrary categories, humans can know certain things about God in terms of God himself because God is equal and similar to himself. God’s revelation of himself is consistent with who God is, because God is simple.

## 1.2 Totus

The second half of this definition describes God as all mind, spirit, understanding, thought, reason, hearing, sight, light, and the source of all good (*sensus, spiritus, sensuabilitas, ennoia, ratio, auditus, oculus, lumen, fons omnium bonorum*), which is one of the most distinctive markers of this doctrine of simplicity in the rest of *Against Heresies*. Irenaeus first uses a similar string of terms in this manner in Book 1:

[God] is all thought, all desire, all mind, all light, all sight, all hearing, [and] the entire source of all that is good.

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the categories of “part-whole,” “same-different,” and “motive-mobile” in Middle Platonism. Dillon, *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism*, 108.

47 Schoedel, “Enclosing, not Enclosed: The early Doctrine of God,” 79, n. 21. He cites a number of texts that describe God as “altogether like himself.” For example, ps-Aristotle, *De Melisso* 1.974a 13 and 1.974a 15 describe the One as ἐν δὲ ὃν ὁμοιον εἶναι πάντῃ and ὁμοιον πάντῃ ἀκίνητον εἶναι τὸ ἐν (LCL 307.462), or ps-Aristotle, *De Xenophanes* 3.397a 38, ἐνα δ’ ὄντα ὁμοιον εἶναι πάντῃ (LCL 307.484), or Diogenes Laertius 9.24 who describes the One as ἐν ὁμοιον ἑαυτῷ (LCL 185.432). See W.S. Hett, ed., *Aristotle: Minor Works: On Colours. On Things Heard. Physiognomics. On Plants. On Marvellous Things Heard. Mechanical Problems. On Indivisible Lines. The Situations and Names of Winds. On Melissus, Xenophanes, Gorgias*, LCL 307 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936); R.D. Hicks, ed., *Diogenes Laertius: Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. 2, LCL 185 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925).

48 Bastit claims that *sibimetipsi similis et aequalis est* parallels the ἴσον ἀπάντῃ which Timon of Phlius attributed to Xenophanes, in which God was shown to be different from humans. See Agnès Bastit, “Simplicité de l’intellect et perception divine chez Plin l’Ancien et Irénée de Lyon: aperçu de la réception d’une sentence de Xénophane à l’époque impériale,” in *Divina Studia: Mélanges de religion et de philosophie anciennes offerts à François Guillaumont*, ed. E. Gavoille and S. Roesch (Bordeaux: Ausonius éditions, 2018), 146.

ὅλος ἔννοια ὦν, ὅλος θέλημα, ὅλος νοῦς, ὅλος φῶς, ὅλος ὀφθαλμός, ὅλος ἀκοή,  
ὅλος πηγὴ πάντων τῶν ἀγαθῶν.

cum sit totus cogitatus et totus sensus et totus oculus et totus auditus et  
totus fons omnium bonorum.<sup>49</sup>

In *haer.* 2.13.3, God is *totus sensus, spiritus, sensuabilitas, ennoia, ratio, auditus, oculus, lumen, fons omnium bonorum*, and in *haer.* 2.13.8, God is *totus Nous* and *Logos*. In *haer.* 2.28.4–5, God is *totus mens, ratio, Spiritus operans, lux*. In *haer.* 4.11.2, God is *totus lumen, mens, substantia, fons omnium bonorum*. While this string is only explicitly linked to divine simplicity in *haer.* 2.13.3, his arguments elsewhere are consistent with and develop this definition of divine simplicity.

This citation is originally from a pre-Socratic source that argues against anthropomorphic deities, and it was developed through philosophical and Christian usage. Xenophanes (5th century BCE) states in *Frag.* 24 “[God] is all Seeing, all Thinking, and all Hearing” (ὅλος ὄρᾳ, ὅλος δὲ νοεῖ, ὅλος δὲ τ’ἀκούει).<sup>50</sup> These verbs come from classical literature’s description of deities: the first two verbs come from Homer and the third comes from Hesiod.<sup>51</sup> Xenophanes was opposing gods that were part of the created order. Irenaeus also explicitly opposes gods being a part of the created order, and he explicitly aligns the deity of his opponents with the deities from Homer, Hesiod, and Aristophanes (in *haer.* 2.14). However, Irenaeus’ argument parallels Xenophanes’ larger theological effort in several ways. Other fragments from Xenophanes parallel Irenaeus’ definition of divine simplicity, particularly *fragment* 23, “One God, greatest among gods and men, not at all like mortals in body or thought” and *fragment* 25 “... but completely without toil he accomplishes all things by

49 *haer.* 1.12.2 (sc 264.184). According to Rousseau (sc 264.183), this line can also be found in Epiphanius, *Pan. haer.* 33.2; cf. John of Cyprus x.9 and *Intro* p. 90. According to Rousseau (sc 263.237–238), and in disagreement to Harvey, this section belongs here because, (1) one cannot make sense of this section without the key terms from Xenophanes, and (2) there are parallel passages (in 2.12.2; 2.28.4; 4.11.2). Harvey follows the systematic substitution of the substantive auxiliary verbs, and according to Diels, this line should read, ὅλος ὄρᾳ, ὅλος δὲ νοεῖ, ὅλος δὲ τ’ἀκούει. Herman Diels, ed., *Xenophanes: Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Druckerei Hildebrand, 1952), 135. Rousseau believes that Irenaeus is “highlighting with much vigor the absolute simplicity of God.” Rousseau and Doutreleau, sc 263, 238.

50 *Frag.* 24. Diels, *Xenophanes: Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 135; J.H. Leshner, ed., *Xenophanes: Fragments* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 31. The fragment is from Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors*, 9.144.

51 *Il.* 11.3.276–277 and *Op.* 267. See Bastit, “Simplicité de l’intellect et perception divine chez Plin l’Ancien et Irénée de Lyon,” 142.

the thought of his mind.”<sup>52</sup> Like Xenophanes, Irenaeus argues against a comparison between God’s Thought and human thought, and argues that God’s Thought and activity are not separated.

However, Irenaeus adjusts the material from Xenophanes in two key ways when he states that God is, “... all mind, all spirit, all understanding, all thought, all reason, all hearing, all eye/sight, all light and the entire source of all that is good.” First, he adds material, specifically that God is all light, all spirit (an explicitly Christian adaptation), and the entire source of all that is good (a Platonic and Middle Platonist description).<sup>53</sup> Second, Irenaeus uses the nominal, rather than verbal form for all of these terms.<sup>54</sup> His use of the nominal form of this citation may have been part of a larger appropriation that preferred the nominal usage. In her study of this particular citation, Agnès Bastit focuses on its usage in Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies* and Pliny’s *Natural History*, but she also references other authors (including Theophilus of Antioch and Clement of Alexandria’s *str.* 7.2.5; 7.37).<sup>55</sup> Pliny uses this citation with six nouns (citing Xenophanes as found in Aristotle and Theophrastus), in contrast to the verbal

52 J.E. Raven, G.S. Kirk, and M. Schofield, eds., *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 168–176. In his commentary on *Fragment* 24, Lesher suggests that to properly understand what Xenophanes means by “all sight, all thought, and all hearing,” one needs to read this alongside *Fragment* 23 and *Fragment* 25. See Lesher, *Xenophanes: Fragments*, 102.

*Frag.* 23: One God greatest among gods and men, not at all like mortals in body or thought;

εἷς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος, οὗ τι δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοῖος οὐδὲ νόημα.

*Frag.* 24: He is all sight, all thought, and all hearing ...;

οὐλος ὄρᾱι, οὐλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὐλος δὲ τ’ ἀκούει.

*Frag.* 25: ... but completely without toil he accomplishes all things by the thought of his mind;

ἀλλ’ ἀπάνευθε πόνοιο νόου φρενὶ πάντα κραδαίνει.

*Frag.* 26: ... always he abides in the same place, not moving at all, nor is it seemly for him to travel to different places at different times;

αἰεὶ δ’ ἐν ταύτῳ μῖμνει κινεούμενος οὐδέν, οὐδὲ μετέρχεσθαί μιν ἐπιπρέπει ἄλλοτε ἄλλῃ.

For parallels in Irenaeus, compare *Frag.* 23 with *haer.* 2.13.3; *Frag.* 24 with *haer.* 1.12.2, 2.13.3, 2.13.8, 2.28.4, 2.28.5, and 4.11.2; and *Frag.* 25 with *haer.* 1.12.2.

53 Bastit, “Simplicité de l’intellect et perception divine ches Pline l’Ancien et Irénée de Lyon,” 146; R.M. Grant, *Jesus after the Gospels: The Christ of the Second Century* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 97.

54 Christopher Stead has noted that in Irenaeus, the verbal form has been adjusted to a nominal form, and so he argues that there must have been some intermediate source. See Stead, *Divine Substance*, 189.

55 Bastit, “Simplicité de l’intellect et perception divine ches Pline l’Ancien et Irénée de Lyon.”



usage of Sextus Empiricus within a century (*Math.* 1.144). Bastit argues that this citation circulated in both verbal and nominal forms: the verbal emphasising activity and the nominal emphasising substance.<sup>56</sup> She supports this by examples from doxographies like Diogenes Laertius, who accounts for the theology of Xenophanes in both the verbal and nominal form.<sup>57</sup> She shows that while the original verbal form was never forgotten (as seen in Pliny, Theophilus, and Clement), the nominal form took over because it was better suited to express the tension between multiplicity of divine activity while strongly affirming unity.<sup>58</sup> Irenaeus belongs with this latter set of texts, which sought to retain a tension between distinction and unity in divine activity. Although scholars have often followed Stead, who has argued that Xenophanes' language was developed by Irenaeus to assert that "the divine operations are *identical* with one another,"<sup>59</sup> I disagree. Using the nominal form of this citation allowed early authors to retain a sense of distinction between divine operations, and though the concept of a simple God from Middle Platonism was available to him, Irenaeus preferred a particular version of this pre-Socratic philosophy for his explanation of God's powers.

Irenaeus also parallels other contemporary texts, such as *Eugnostos the Blessed* and Clement's *Stromata*, which suggests that he was participating in a larger Christian appropriation of this description of God.<sup>60</sup> In its introduction,

56 As a further example of this, Bastit points to Seneca's *QNat.* 1.praef.13–14, where God is first designated substantively as *mens*, and then nominally as *ratio*. She labels this shift as a displacement of action.

57 The three verbs are explained with three nouns, though the last one is actually an adjective. Diog. Laert. 9.2.19. Οὐσίαν θεοῦ σφαιροειδῆ, μηδὲν ὁμοιον ἔχουσιν ἀνθρώπων· ὅλον δὲ ὁρᾶν καὶ ὅλον ἀκούειν, μὴ μέντοι ἀναπνεῖν· σύμπαντά τε εἶναι νοῦν καὶ φρόνησιν καὶ αἰδίων

58 Bastit, "Simplicité de l'intellect et perception divine ches Pline l'Ancien et Irénée de Lyon," 50.

59 Stead, *Divine Substance*, 188–189. Stead's reading is followed by Briggman. See Stead, *Divine Substance*, 188–189; Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 96–97. For further discussion, see section 2.2.2 below.

60 *str.* 7.5.5; 7.37.6; *Trin.* 6. Schoedel suggests that in *Orac. Sib.* 8.282–285, this is applied to God as Creator, while *str.* 7.2, 5.5; *Eug.* 7.3.6–11; Hilary's *Trin.* 2.6; *Tract. super psalm.* 118.19.8; 129.3; Ambrose's *de fide* 1.16.106 include both this language and that of God as "containing, not contained", Justin's *dial.* 127.2 and Theophilus' *Autol.* 2.3 simply state that God sees all and hears all. *Orph. hymn.* 64.8 can be paralleled with the Sibylline Oracles, while Pliny's *Nat. hist.* 2.5.14 uses the formula for pagan interests. Clement also cites Xenophanes *frag.* 23, 14, and 15 (see *str.* 5.109.1; 7.22.1), so it seems very likely that he had more of Xenophanes available. See Schoedel, "Enclosing, not Enclosed: The early Doctrine of God," 78, n. 19; Grant, "Early Christianity and Pre-Socratic Philosophy," 357–384; Stead, *Divine Substance*, 190, n. 72; R.M. Grant, *Gods and the One God: Christian Theology in the Graeco-Roman World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 77. Bastit argues that this citation,

*Eugnostos* communicates a desire to provide an alternative cosmological view beyond the pre-Socratic, Platonic, or Stoic options that claim that “the universe governs itself ... divine forethought has governed it, [or] ... that fate has been in charge.”<sup>61</sup> First, the author introduces the One as immortal and without birth (because whoever is born will die, whoever has a beginning will end, and whoever has a name was fashioned by another), which echoes the Eleatics’ effort to oppose anthropomorphic deities. Then, the One is described as all Mind (*nous*), Thought (*ennoia*), Reflection (*enthymesis*), Consideration (*thronesis*), Reason (*logismos*), and Power (*dynamis*), which are, according to Meyer’s translation, “the sources of all that is, and the entire generation from first to last.”<sup>62</sup> Parrot notes that although *Eugnostos* was not necessarily a “gnostic” text, it was used in the writing of the later “gnostic” text *Sophia of Jesus Christ*, which also includes this description of God as “all mind, thought,” etc., but includes a more explicit hierarchy of subordinate powers.<sup>63</sup> The influence of this phrasing remained present in multiple kinds of communities. While not necessarily arguing that Irenaeus read *Eugnostos* or an earlier version of *Sophia*, these Nag Hammadi texts provide evidence that this phrasing remained in certain streams of “Gnostic” descriptions of God, however, this phrasing was appropriated in a way that was very different to Irenaeus.<sup>64</sup> In both *haer.* 2.13 and in

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as found in Irenaeus, continues much the same in the texts of Cyril of Jerusalem, Hilary of Poitiers, and Victor of Rouen. Bastit, “Simplicité de l’intellect et perception divine chez Plin l’Ancien et Irénée de Lyon,” 51. Cyril of Jerusalem also retains Xenophanes’s “sensory organs” within his quotations. Leshner, *Xenophanes: Fragments*, 103 n. 1. Cyril of Jerusalem uses the same string of ὁλος ὦν ὀφθαλμός καὶ ὁλος ἀκοή καὶ ὁλος νοῦς. *catech.* 6.7. Grant traces the usage of this text through the patristic age. He suggests that this passage depends on 1 Cor 12:17, 18–20, which contains ὀφθαλμός, and ἐν μέλος/πολλὰ μέλη. Furthermore, he points to Hippolytus of Rome’s *Commentary on Daniel* 1:33 which has ὁλος ὀφθαλμός, and Pseudo-Macarius’ 50 *spiritual homilies* 1.2, which have ὅλη ὀφθαλμός, ὅλη φῶς, ὅλη πρόσωπον, ὅλη δόξα, ὅλη Πνεῦμα, and the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, *Bessarion* 11, which has ὁλος ὀφθαλμός. Grant, “Place de Basilide dans la théologie chrétienne ancienne,” 201–206, 12–14. Based on a Greek back-translation from the Armenian, Rousseau argues that Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus, and their descriptions of simplicity, should be traced back to Irenaeus through this particular string of descriptors. Rousseau and Doutreleau, *sc* 263, 366–370.

61 *Eugnostos the Blessed* is a “Gnostic” text dated to have circulated in Egypt and Syria by the third century. Madeleine Scopello, introduction to “*Eugnostos the Blessed*,” in Marvin Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2010), 274–275. See also *Eug.* NHC III.73.3–14 (NHC 3.48–56).

62 *Eug.* NHC III.73.3–14 (NHC 3.58); Meyer, 276–277.

63 Douglas Parrot, “Introduction and Translation of *Eugnostos the Blessed* and the *Sophia of Jesus Christ*” in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. J.A. Robinson (San Francisco, CA: Harper-Collins, 1990), 221. For the parallel text, see *Soph.* III.96.

64 For this book, the most relevant overlap between *Eugnostos the Blessed* and Irenaeus is

*haer.* 2.28.4, he is careful to assert that this list does not entail a sequential production of separated or hierarchical Aeons. Irenaeus explains his own use by differentiating it from a version that would suggest separation or parts in God.

Another, later, parallel can be found in Clement's *Stromata* 5, in which he similarly describes divine simplicity (first introduced in *str.* 2.4.14), though in an apophatic system. Clement starts his argument by challenging the view of the creator in the systems of Valentinus, Basilides, and Marcion (each of which figures prominently in Book 2 of *Against Heresies*).<sup>65</sup> Clement examines the insufficiency of language for a God who is beyond speech, conception, thought, or writing of him (*str.* 5.10). When acknowledging the failures of language, Clement claims that God cannot be compared to creation because God is without participation, birth, need, death, or age. One should not imagine that he has, "hands, and feet, and mouth, and eyes, and going in and coming out, and resentments and threats," but these Old Testament appellations (ὀνομάτων) should be understood allegorically.<sup>66</sup> After claiming that God cannot be contained or circumscribed (the end result in the system of Basilides),<sup>67</sup> he again admits that it is impossible (ἀδύνατον) to speak about the Maker of the universe.<sup>68</sup> He seems to explicitly contradict what Irenaeus has stated, "Nor should one rightly call him All (ὅλον), for 'the All' is regarding magnitude and he is Father of All. Nor should it be spoken of him so that he has parts."<sup>69</sup> This follows the Middle Platonic rejection of "parts" and "whole" in a simple God, particularly as it relates to categories ("genus," "difference," "species," or "number" in *str.* 5.12.81). However, Clement is not rejecting positive statements about God entirely, for in the following paragraph he shows that even if one were to use terms like "Good" or "Mind", or titles such as "Father" or "Creator", these are not to be taken individually (ἐκαστον μνηνυτικόν), but collectively (ἅπαντα

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their pairing of God as "all" Mind, Thought, etc. Two additional parallels are (1) in their references to a God that is unnameable and without a name (*Eug.* 71.3–73.3), which Irenaeus reveals as a position of his opponents (*haer.* 1.1.1; 1.11.3; 1.15.5), and (2) in their view of kingship, for in *Eugnostos the Blessed* 75.15–23 the Pleroma is described as kingless (ἄβασιλευτος), while Irenaeus repeatedly utilises the metaphor of God as a king (*haer.* 1.8.1; 2.2.3; 4.17.6). For discussion on this latter parallel, see Panchaud and Janz, "The 'Kingless Generation,' and the Polemical rewriting of certain Nag Hammadi Texts," 439–460.

65 *str.* 5.1.

66 *str.* 5.11.68.2–3 (SC 278.138). ἀμέτοχος ... ἀγέννητος ... ἀνεκδήσις ... ἀθάνατός ... ἀγήρων ... καὶ χεῖρας καὶ πόδας καὶ στόμα καὶ ὀφθαλμούς καὶ εἰσόδους καὶ ἐξόδους καὶ ὀργὰς καὶ ἀπειλὰς.

67 See *haer.* 2.2 for parallel in Irenaeus.

68 *str.* 5.12.78; 5.12.79.

69 *str.* 5.12.81.5–6 (SC 278.158–160). οὐκ ἂν δὲ ὅλον εἴποι τις αὐτὸν ὁρθῶς· ἐπὶ μεγέθει γὰρ τάττεται τὸ ὅλον καὶ ἔστι τῶν ὁλων πατήρ. οὐδὲ μὴν μέρη τινὰ αὐτοῦ λεκτέον.

ἐνδεικτικᾶ) as the power of God.<sup>70</sup> Thus, he rejects the usage of ὅλος as a term for God if taken to circumscribe God by a single category, and instead, he uses these terms and titles to describe the power of the Almighty collectively, which is congruent with Irenaeus' argument that these terms are to be understood in light of one another. Thus, even though radical apophaticism (or the *via negativa*, as Osborn describes it) guides Clement's version of divine simplicity, it is precisely in his rejection of ὅλος that he comes close to affirming a version of simplicity that is similar to Irenaeus.<sup>71</sup>

In his definition of divine simplicity, Irenaeus claims that God is simple, non-composite, similar and equal to himself, and entirely being or having his names and powers. He uses this definition to specify that since God is simple and non-composite, (1) human language and categories cannot capture the perfection of divinity, (2) God is not subject to external measurement or definition but only comparable to God himself, and (3) God's powers and activities cannot be separated. The prominence of this same terminology in other authors suggests that he was participating in a larger Christian debate that was exploring this philosophical language about God. Scripture provides specific titles and terms to describe God, but the concept of divine simplicity allows Irenaeus to specify what these titles and terms can mean, because the meaning of these words for humans cannot be univocally applied to God.

## 2 *Haer.* 2.13.4B–10: Parameters for Language about God

In his discussion on divine simplicity, Irenaeus adheres to parameters for more appropriate ways to speak about God.<sup>72</sup> Irenaeus has a gradient scale of right and wrong ways to speak about God, and these parameters on language about God guide a more appropriate usage of language.<sup>73</sup> Because God is simple,

70 *str.* 5.12.82.1 (SC 278.160). Ἐν ἡ τὰγαθὸν ἡ νοῦν ἡ αὐτὸ τὸ ὄν ἡ πατέρα ἡ θεὸν ἡ δημιουργὸν ἡ κύριον.

71 Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 111–131; Radde-Gallwitz, *Transformation of Divine Simplicity*, 38–59. See also the brief discussion in Osborn, *The Beginning of Christian Philosophy*, 49.

72 In part, I am challenging the view held by Widdicombe, that Irenaeus “does not discuss the question of whether and how language applies to God.” Peter Widdicombe, “Irenaeus and the Knowledge of God as Father,” in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, and Legacy*, ed. S. Parvis and P. Foster (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 142.

73 Throughout *haer.* 2.13, Irenaeus describes a gradient scale of language about God. He says that his opponents have sinned (*peccauerunt*) in what they are saying about God's Wisdom, that they have lied (*mentiti sunt*) against God, and their discourse only sounds appro-

language about God must be used in a particular way and have a particular meaning. I have noted two parameters. First, discourse about God cannot apply human process, affection, or division to God. Second, in discourse about God, God's titles and powers should be mutually entailing, so God's names and powers imply one another without them being identical, since they are distinct in unity. These parameters specify what terminology about God can mean by restricting how it can be used, given that God is simple and without separation or parts. In my reading, the Rule of Truth and the Scriptures provide the terminology for speaking of God (with terms like creator, containing but not contained, One, Word, Light, etc.), and the notion of divine simplicity clarifies how the scriptural language can be used and what it can mean.<sup>74</sup> After all, Irenaeus and his opponents shared much of the same vocabulary. Irenaeus' concept of divine simplicity depends on scripture and then generates parameters that guide what can be said in its interpretation.

### 2.1 *Parameter 1: The Creator/Creature Differentiation*

In this first parameter, discourse about God cannot attribute human process, affection, and division to God. The creator/creature differentiation, as a general

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priate (*apta*) to those who are ignorant of God. *haer.* 2.13.9 (SC 294.124–128). However, this section is not purely negative polemic. Irenaeus also affirms the way “the religious and pious (*religiosis ac piis*) speak about God.” *haer.* 2.13.3 (SC 294.114). He admits that God is indescribable (*inenarrabilis*), but affirms that He is “appropriately and rightly (*bene ac recte*) called Mind,” though not similar to human thinking, and “most appropriately (*rectissime*) called Light,” though not at all similar to our light. *haer.* 2.13.4 (294.116). He claims that someone with his view does not sin (*non peccat*), and while this person is still perceiving God insufficiently (*minus*), their view is more appropriate (*decentiora ... magis*) than that of his opponents. *haer.* 2.13.8 (SC 294.122–124). He concludes his discussion on the relationship between God's powers and titles with, “in whatever way it is possible and right (*possibile et dignum*) for humans to hear and speak about God.” *haer.* 2.13.9 (SC 294.126).

74 Cf. Behr, “Synchronic and Diachronic Harmony: St. Irenaeus on Divine Simplicity,” 429. Behr provides three possible reasons for Irenaeus' divine simplicity, and he rejects two of them. He rejects that “the doctrine of divine simplicity functions as a kind of grammar, to make sure that when we speak of the revealed God, we do so coherently” and suggests that instead, “the doctrine of divine simplicity is bound up with the way in which that revelation is made, forcing us to reconsider both the nature of revelation and what the teaching about divine simplicity is in fact about.” While I agree that Irenaeus did not promote a metaphysical system that was logically prior to God's revelation of himself, if grammar is a set of rules governing the relationship between words, sometimes intrinsic and other times explicit, which allow vocabulary to be meaningfully deployed, then this relationship does not require a logical priority. Grammar does not exist logically prior to vocabulary, but instead, they have a dynamic relationship. These parameters exist intrinsically in the vocabulary of scripture and the rule. Divine simplicity functions as an operational doctrine that prohibits certain uses of vocabulary about God.

category, is not new to the study of Irenaeus,<sup>75</sup> but I would like to suggest that key components of this differentiation depend on the concept of divine simplicity. In the text around the definition of divine simplicity, Irenaeus regularly claims that language about humans should be used differently when describing God. In part, this strong differentiation between creator and creature may be reflecting his ongoing dependence on the pre-Socratic philosopher Xenophanes, who, as stated above, was also famous for opposition to anthropomorphic descriptions of the gods (*haer.* 2.13.3b).<sup>76</sup> Irenaeus outlines reasons and ways language about composite humans can still carry meaning, but language about God must carry a different meaning because God is simple.

#### 2.1.1 *Haer.* 2.12.1: “To Reckon” (*Numerare*) God

In *haer.* 2.12, prior to introducing divine simplicity, Irenaeus begins to outline this creator/creature differentiation. For most scholars, the concept of excess and defect provides the bookends for Irenaeus’ argument in *haer.* 2.12, where he argues that his opponents’ system had about thirty emissions.<sup>77</sup> However, the verb *numerare* guides this entire discussion, and it is used to argue that the Father should not be counted or reckoned (*enumerari, adnumerari*) with the same language that describes the emissions, begetting, and passions of created things, nor can God’s powers be numbered or reckoned as separated from one another or from the Father. He argues that the Father should not be counted/reckoned (*enumerari non debet; non debet cum eis adnumerari*) with other emissions, nor he who was not emitted with what was emitted, nor the unbe-

75 This is a common trope in studies of Irenaeus. For example, his *creatio ex nihilo* depends on the creator/creature differentiation, since God has no beginning while matter must have one. Similarly, the creator/creature differentiation is the reason his view of deification is so striking. For respective discussions, see Gerhard May, *Creatio ex nihilo: The Doctrine of ‘Creation out of Nothing’ in Early Christian Thought*, trans. A.S. Worrall (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 164–178; Ysabel de Andia, *Homo Vivens: Incorruptibilité et divinisation de l’homme selon Irénée de Lyon* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1986, 1986), 53–90.

76 For example, in *Fragment* 23, Xenophanes states, “One God greatest among gods and men, not at all like mortals in body or thought.” εἷς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος, οὐ τι δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοίος οὐδὲ νόημα. Leshner, *Xenophanes: Fragments*, 102. For more on Xenophanes’s opposition to anthropomorphic deities, see James Warren, *Presocratics* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 42–50.

77 Rousseau and Doutreleau, *SC* 293, 139–140; Unger and Dillon, *ACW* 65, 128, n. 3. For defect, Irenaeus counts through their emissions to show that they have only provided twenty-nine emissions because many of these powers (like Mind and Truth) cannot be understood separately (*haer.* 2.12.1–2). For excess, he points to the final emission, which resulted in Only-begotten, Christ, Holy Spirit, and Savior (each of which are individual Aeons), and argues that this demonstrates thirty-four emissions.

gotten with what was begotten, nor the incomprehensible with what is comprehended, nor what is unformed with the formed.<sup>78</sup> Prior to the claim about the simple God, Irenaeus differentiates between language about the Father, and language about creatures.

### 2.1.2 *Haer.* 2.13.1–3a: Stoic Psychology and Divine Intellect

Immediately prior to the definition of divine simplicity, Irenaeus opposes attributing human mental motions to God because this process results in ascribing affect and passion to God. Some language is necessarily anthropomorphic and anthropopathic, but he challenges the way his opponents have ascribed human processes of thought and speech to God. They, therefore, have ascribed human affect and passion to God in their effort to try to separate God from their divine powers that experienced passion. Irenaeus adheres to his differentiation between creator and creature by using the philosophical concept of divine simplicity rather than Stoic psychology to understand scriptural language about God's powers and God's activity.

Irenaeus opposes the way his opponents have attributed the human processes of thought and speech to God by referring to Stoic language in three ways.<sup>79</sup> As is often the case, Irenaeus does not use these concepts of mental

78 *haer.* 2.12.1 (SC 294.96). Pater enim omnium enumerari non debet cum reliqua emissione, qui non est emissus cum ea quae emissa est, et innatus cum ea quae nata est, et quem nemo capit cum ea quae ab eo capitur, et propter hoc incapabilis, qui infiguratus est cum ea quae figurata est. Secundum enim id quod melior quam reliqui, non debet cum eis adnumerari, et hoc cum Aeone passibili et in errore constituto, qui est impassibilis et non errans.

79 Many authors have noted Irenaeus' debts to Stoicism in other discussions. For example, Fantino notes that Irenaeus' idea of *oikonomia* and interpretation of Eph 4:6 has Stoic roots. Fantino, *La théologie d'Irénée*, 106–126; 295–299. Houssiau and Ochogavía have noted how Irenaeus' concept of the *Logos* is indebted to Stoicism, as noted by Briggman. Albert Houssiau, "L'Exégèse de Matthieu XI, 27b selon Saint Irénée," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 29 (1953): 335–337; Juan Ochogavía, *Visibile Patris Filius: A Study of Irenaeus's Teaching on Revelation and Tradition* (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1964), 77–79; Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 66–67. Only Eric Osborn mentions the Stoic influence in *haer.* 2.12, but he does not examine its implications. He has shown the ways in which the Stoic conception of a cosmic Mind, which pervades creation but precludes evil, is paralleled in Irenaeus' text. See Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 35–36. Osborn cites Diogenes Laertius and his description of how God's powers and creation give rise to the many names of God (Diogenes Laertius 7.147; LS, 54A) and he cites Cleanthes and his description of how God turns chaos into order by bringing together "all things, good and bad" (Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus*; LS, 541), along with citations from Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, Plutarch's *De communibus notitiis* and *De Stoicorum repugnantiis*, and Sextus Empiricus' *adversus mathematicos*. There is a parallel discussion in Orbe, when con-

motion in exactly the same way as they appear in Stoic debates about emotions, and because these sections of Irenaeus do not exist in Greek (only in Latin and some Armenian), my argument is primarily based on conceptual similarity rather than terminological identity. First, and without explanation, Irenaeus notes that his opponents refer to their Ogdoad as the *principale et summum* and the *principalem et primum*, which are double translations for τὸ ἡγεμονικόν (*haer.* 2.13.1).<sup>80</sup> However, he also notes that in their order of emissions, his opponents have placed Thought before Mind. He argues that Mind, as the source of mental motions, must come first, so presumably, the ἡγεμονικόν (as the ruling faculty) is also accountable for any resulting thought, word, or passion in a person. Irenaeus notes that if Stoic psychology is used to understand God as the source of all, then God cannot be separated from the result. Therefore, Irenaeus opposes deploying Stoic psychology to explain the divine Mind because, as he sees it, this would result in impious claims about God.<sup>81</sup>

Second, Irenaeus describes the five motions of the mind that lead to speech in a way that closely resembles Stoic descriptions of thought and speech. Irenaeus notes that, when using terms like *Ennoia* (knowledge), *Nous* (mind), or *Sensus* (logic), human thought starts with the mind and remains within (*manente intus*), and these mental motions are only given different names

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siders the Stoic influence on Basil when considering God's Thought from Seneca, *ep.* 65.7. See Antonio Orbe, *En los albores de la exegesis Johannea* (Rome: Universitas Gregoriana, 1955), 190, n. 94.

80 (SC 293.234–235). Rousseau shows that this adjective appears in Ps 49 [50]:14, a note which is followed in Unger's translation (ACW 65.130) n. 4. A similar pairing, *primam et principalem Ogdoadam* appears in *haer.* 2.12.6 (SC 294.104), alongside a discussion on the eminent/interior Word. In *haer.* 2.12, Irenaeus introduced the interior Word, which suggests that the philosophical concept of mental motions in the context of interior and exterior Word is also being considered here. For a similar pairing of the motions of the *hegemonikon* followed by a distinction between immanent and expressed reason, see Nemesius, *nat. hom.* 12 and 14, where both discussions refer to the Stoicism of Sextus Empiricus.

81 Both the Stoics and their readers regularly linked the *hegemonikon* to the cosmos, so this move by Irenaeus' opponents had philosophical precedent. See Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, 259, where he shows that the ἡγεμονικόν was usually identified with heaven itself, but Cleanthes preferred the image of the sun (SVF I 499, II 644). In Galen's exploration of the source of thought and discourse, the brain and its reason are compared to heaven and the gods. The brain is the ruling part of the soul (ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρχή) just as the gods in heaven rule the whole universe. Similarly, the brain is home to the rational faculty (λογισμοῦ) just as heaven is the home to the gods. Galen, *De plac. Hipp. et Plat.* 2.4.17–18 (De Lacy, 120–121). Phillip de Lacy, ed., *Galen: On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* (Berlin Akademie-Verlag, 1981).



(*uocabula*) because of continuance and development (*perseuerationem et augmentum*), not because of physical change in a person (*immutationem*).<sup>82</sup> In other words, thinking does not create living beings:

By way of explanation, the first motion of the mind on some object is called thought. But when it continues and develops and takes possession of the soul, it is styled intention. This intention, when it dwells on the same object for a long time and is, as it were, approved, is called understanding. This understanding, when it has continued for a long time, becomes counsel. When the development and activity of counsel have been very extensive, it becomes thought. This, even while remaining in the mind, is rightly called word, from which the uttered word is emitted. Now all these activities mentioned are one and the same thing: they have their origin in the mind and get their names because of development, but not because of a change in substance or because of the loss of the body.<sup>83</sup>

Prima enim motio eius de aliquo ennoia appellatur; perseuerans autem et aucta et uniuersam apprehendens animam, enthymesis uocatur; haec autem enthymesis, multum temporis faciens in eodem et uelut probata, sensatio nominatur; haec autem sensatio, in multum dilatata, consilium facta est; augmentum autem et motus in multum dilatatus consilii, cogitatio nominatur, quae etiam in mente perseuerans uerbum rectissime appellabitur, ex quo emissibilis emittitur uerbum. Vnum autem et idem est omnia quae praedicta sunt, a quo initium accipientia et secundum augmentum adsummentia appellationes. Quemadmodum et corpus hominis aliquando quidem nouellum, aliquando quidem uirile, aliquando autem senile, secundum augmentum et perseuerantiam accepit appellationes, sed non secundum substantiae demutationem neque secundum corporis amissionem<sup>84</sup>

82 *haer.* 2.13.1 (SC 294.110). Qui principalem et primum eius quae est intus absconditae et inuisibilis adfectionis locum continet, a qua sensus generatur et ennoia et enthymesis et talia quae non alia sunt praeter nun, sed illius ipsius, quemadmodum praediximus, de aliquo in cogitatu dispositae qualeslibet motiones, secundum perseuerationem et augmentum, non secundum immutationem, uocabula accipientes, et in cogitationem conterminatae, et in uerbum coemissae, sensu manente intus et condente et administrante et gubernante libere et ex sua potestate, quemadmodum et uult, quae praedicta sunt.

83 Translation adapted from Unger and Dillon, *ACW* 65, 42–43.

84 *haer.* 2.13.2 (SC 294.110–112).

In the next section Irenaeus gives a different list of five mental motions:

The person who is actually contemplating X, thinks about it;  
and he who is thinking, knows X;  
Indeed, he who actually knows X, considers X;  
and because he is considering it, he is drawing X to his soul;  
and because he is drawing X to his soul, he says X.<sup>85</sup>

*de quo enim quis contemplatur, de eo et cogitat; et de quo cogitat, de hoc et sapit; de quo autem et sapit, de hoc et consiliatur; et quod consiliatur, hoc et animo tractat; et quod animo tractat, hoc et loquitur.*<sup>86</sup>

In these two sections, the five mental movements (*ennoia*, *enthymesis*, *sensus*, *consilium*, *cogitatio* in the first and *contemplo*, *cogito*, *sapio*, *consililior*, *tracto* in the second) that lead to speech (*uerbum* in the first, and *loquor* in the second) display a human process, but they do not lead to separate beings. Rousseau has speculated on the origin of this list, relying heavily on the extant transliterated Greek (*ennoia*, *enthymesis*, *sensus*), comparing the five movements as nouns and then verbs in Latin, Armenian, and Greek (see Table 2).<sup>87</sup>

TABLE 2 Rousseau's comparison of Latin, Armenian, and backtranslated Greek in SC 293.238.

Latin	Armenian	Greek
ennoia	մտածորին	ἐννοια
enthymesis	խոհելորին	ἐνθύμησις
sensatio	խոհականորին	φρόνησις
consilium	խորհուրդ	βουλή
cogitatio	խոհաբանորին	διαλογισμός

85 The lines are not divided in this way in either the manuscript or the critical edition, but I have divided the propositions by line in order to facilitate comprehension of Irenaeus' logical progression.

86 *haer.* 2.13.3 (SC 294.112). In the notes on the text, Rosseau dedicates the entirety of Appendix 2 to the question of these five movements of the soul, speculating on whether they are quoted by Maximus the Confessor and John of Damascus. See Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 293, 236–240, 366–370.

87 This back-translation shows that in Greek, the noun and verb through this passage were linked in the five movements, as mostly occurs in the Armenian (the exception, it seems occurs with ἐννοια/ἐννοέομαι, as the Armenian noun/verb are not the same). See SC 293.-237–238.

TABLE 2 Rousseau's comparison (*cont.*)

Latin	Armenian	Greek
contemplor	ընդ միտս ածէն	ἐννοέομαι
cogito	խոհելութիւնս առնենմ	ἐνθυμέομαι
sapio	խոհական լինիմ	φρονέω
consilior	խորհիմ	βουλευομαι
animo tracto	խոհաբանենմ	διαλογίζομαι

Some have suggested possible parallels with Qumran texts, Hermetic texts, and later Manichean writings, but these are inconclusive.<sup>88</sup> Irenaeus could be drawing from the creative activity of Wisdom in Proverbs 3 and 8, but again, there are missing terms (ἐνθύμησις) and there is no clear progression of mental motion.<sup>89</sup> *Apocryphon of John* has five of these mental powers as Aeons, but they are in a larger list of twelve.<sup>90</sup> Once again, if this list, and its variety, is examined through the lens of Stoic language of mental motions leading to speech, then Irenaeus and his opponents could be part of an ongoing philosophical debate in a Christian setting that explored the place of psychology in metaphysics.<sup>91</sup>

88 Orbe opens his examination of this passage with these three possibilities. See Orbe, *Hacia la Primera Teología de la Procesión del Verbo*, 365, n. 13. For Qumran texts, he suggests Qumran 1 qh 11,28. At the end of *Asclepius* 41, there is a prayer that thanks God for these (*sensu, ratione, intelligentia ... cognitione*), which is a close parallel. In *Asclepius* 11 there is also a list of the four faculties of thought (*animi, sensus, memoriae, providentiae*), but this list of human faculties could just as easily have come from philosophical discourse. Orbe does not specify which Manichean text he is referring to, but the list of these five appear in the names of the soul in the Manichean description of reincarnation. See Epiphanius, *Pan.* 66.28.1 (3.2).

89 Gregory of Nyssa uses ἔννοια, φρόνησις and βουλή in the context of mental motions, based on Proverbs 3 and 8 in *Against Eunomius* 3.1–2.

90 See *Apocryphon of John* 8.1–25. One could add the *Acts of Thomas*, 27, though the terms appear in the context of several other incantations being evoked, and not mental motions.

91 There were various strains of Valentinianism, one which viewed the generated Aeons as individuals and another which viewed the generated Aeons as somehow expressing a kind of unity. For a distinction between these two types of Valentinians, including their different views of generation and the individuality of Aeons, see chapter 20 of Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 193–247. For a discussion on whether they should be characterised as “Eastern” and “Western,” see Joel Kalvesmaki, “Italian Versus Eastern Valentinianism?,” *vc* 62, no. 1 (2008). Within the discussion for divine simplicity, both in *haer.* 2.13.5–6 and later in the “generation” section of *haer.* 2.17.4–5, Irenaeus argues primarily against those who divide the Aeons, but he also argues against those opponents who describe the generation in their cosmology as similar to the generation of light, which is simple. He states that “even if” the generation of the Aeons is like light, the problem with their view is in

By examining this list of mental motions through the lens of the Stoic tradition, one can better understand that Irenaeus rejects them because they separate God and result in affect and passion. Examining mental progression by isolating the different motions of the mind was prominent in Stoic system of thought. In Diogenes Laertius, the human motion of the mind is a process that is entirely prior and without speech, from presentation (φαντασία), to a thought which is capable of expressing itself, to a proposition that a person will receive (as a seal stamps an image), which is then issued from the mind through speech as *pneuma* under tension.<sup>92</sup> In his summary of Stoic moral psychology, Brennan argues that normally, “this logos is a persistent state of the soul, persisting as long as the impression does,”<sup>93</sup> however he admits that, though rare, in some Stoic texts this process sounds like a quasi-deliberative or discursive process, particularly in Epictetus.<sup>94</sup> This description of a process continues in later philosophical writings.<sup>95</sup> Aëtius states that according to the Stoics, the *hegemonikon* produces impressions, assents, perceptions, and impulses (φαντασίας, συγκαταθέσεις, αἰσθήσεις, ὁρμάς), finalizing in an utterance (λογισμὸν).<sup>96</sup>

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the difference between the Aeon and its generator: (1) they are not united, (2) they are not contemporaneous, and (3) they are of a different substance. For discussion, see Chapter 4. While some parts of Irenaeus’ criticisms apply only to opponents who hold to a view of separated Aeons, he also addresses criticisms toward those who prefer the metaphor of simple, generated light.

92 Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 7.49–50, 54–55 (LCL 185.158–159, 164). Translation from Hicks, LCL 185. προηγείται γὰρ ἡ φαντασία, εἴθ’ ἡ διάνοια ἐκλαλητική ὑπάρχουσα, ὃ πάσχει ὑπὸ τῆς φαντασίας, τοῦτο ἐκφέρει λόγῳ and λόγος δέ ἐστι φωνὴ σημαντικὴ ἀπὸ διανοίας ἐκπεπομένη. This same progression, from impression to spoken word, along with the illustration of the seal on a coin, can be found in Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.20.

93 Tad Brennan, “Stoic Moral Psychology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. B. Inwood (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 261–262, n. 8. This footnote provides a succinct and clear summary of the Stoic doctrine on the expression of a proposition.

94 Brennan, “Stoic Moral Psychology,” 262. He points to *Ench.* 1 and *Diss.* 3.12.15.

95 For Philo a living animal has both imagination and appetite, and he describes the mind’s interaction as stretching the perception, touching it through sensation, reaching it, and comprehending it. ἡ δὲ ὁρμή, τὸ ἀδελφὸν τῆς φαντασίας, κατὰ τὴν τοῦ νοῦ τονικήν δύναμιν, ἦν τείνας δι’ αἰσθήσεως ἅπτεται τοῦ ὑποκειμένου καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸ χωρεῖ γλιχόμενος ἐφικέσθαι καὶ συλλαβεῖν αὐτό. Philo, *Leg.* 1.30 (LCL 226.166). Elsewhere, Philo lists the seven portions of the soul, which include the five senses, the organ of speech, and the power of generation (*Leg.* 1.11). He describes the activities of the mind alongside the sleep and dreams (*Leg.* 2.31), and he describes the vision of the soul in terms of counsel, understanding, reason, and opinion. These are all elements present in Stoic descriptions of the movements of the mind and later summaries of their positions.

96 Aëtius, *Plac.* 4.21.1. J. Mansfeld and D.T. Runia, eds., *Aëtiana v: An Edition of the Reconstructed Text of the Placita with a Commentary and a Collection of Related Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 1711–1719; A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, eds., *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), 2.314–315.

Nemesius describes movement toward avoidance or assent (ἀποφυγή and συγκατάθεσις), and this thought and judgement (διανοητικός and κρίσις) includes impulse, conception, deliberation, and choice (ὁρμή, νοέω, βουλευτικόν, and προαιρετικός).<sup>97</sup> In general, Irenaeus' list reflects these readers of Stoic texts, who did not follow an established set of terms, but described the separate parts of the mind's process from thought to expressed word and emotion. According to Irenaeus, his opponents separated God powers into the parts of this process.

The Latin of Irenaeus' translator also echoes Latin writers who explored the Stoic descriptions of the process of thought that led to human emotion. The reference to the *animo tractat* before the word is spoken (*haer.* 2.13.1) has a parallel with Cicero and Seneca, who describe the soul as carried away (*efferrī* and its past participle *elatum*) toward one of the two Stoic reactions (assent or avoidance).<sup>98</sup> In describing the human process of thought, Irenaeus includes the expressed object or impression of the thought-speech process twice (first with *ab hoc* in *haer.* 2.13.1 and then with *de aliquo ... in eodem* in *haer.* 2.13.2),<sup>99</sup> which, in Stoicism, distinguished cognitive adults from a child or animal.<sup>100</sup> A child or animal simply reacts to the impression (e.g. fleeing from danger), but adult cognition has a process that leads to assent or avoidance. This entire discussion starts from an external impression, which then leads to the mental process, and ends in speech or emotion. However, the language of an external impression is problematic when applied to God. Irenaeus has already argued that nothing outside God caused creation, including fate (*haer.* 2.5.4),<sup>101</sup> and

97 Nemesius, *nat. hom.* 12.5–10. M. Morani, ed., *Nemesii Emeseni de natura hominis* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1987), 68. For discussion on the immanent reason and expressed reason in relation to the *hegemonikon*, see *Nat.* 14.

98 See Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and the Peace of Mind: from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 36–37. This concept can be seen in Plato, who describes the drawing of the soul in *Rep.* IV, 437b–c.

99 This is argued by Rousseau (SC 293.234) n. 1, section 3. Thus, in *haer.* 2.13.1, *quae ab hoc est* goes with *motio*, and not with *ennoia*: Nus enim est ipsum quod est principale et summum et uelut principium et fons uniuersi sensus, ennoia autem, quae ab hoc est qualislibet et de quolibet facta motio (SC 294.110). Rousseau also argues that this would follow a standard philosophical definition of βούλησις. This interpretive move is followed in Unger and Dillon, *ACW* 65, 42, 103 n. 2.

100 See discussion in Sorabji, *Emotion and the Peace of Mind: from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, 125–129.

101 This parallels Cicero's argument, that every thought, utterance, and action begins and ends with the same person, stemming from their will and judgment (*voluntas atque iudicium*), and cannot be blamed on something outside the person, not even fate. Cicero, *Parad.* 5.34 (LCL 349.284–287). For a further discussion on the Stoic language of fate and the Middle Platonic development of Providence, see Chapter 3, section 4.2. This debate between Irenaeus and his opponents also parallels the debate between Aristo and Zeno,

both he and his opponents deny that God can be acted upon, so he does not challenge the idea of an external impression. Instead, Irenaeus uses these two lengthy Stoic descriptions to show that mental processes cannot be separated from a human thinker (and therefore, cannot imply separation of powers in God). Regardless, separation of powers in humans still leads to emotion, so likewise, applying this process to God does not avoid the application of affection and passion to God.

The third way this argument parallels language found in Stoic arguments is in Irenaeus' opposition to ascribing emotions to God. Emotions, specifically *adfectiones* and *passiones*, are logically entailed by mental motions.<sup>102</sup> Both Irenaeus and his opponents rejected passion being ascribed to God, but Irenaeus' opponents did ascribe it to God's lowest powers in an effort to distance God from creation. Therefore, Irenaeus seeks to show that this latter passion in their system cannot be separated from God *in se*. Early Stoics agreed that emotion is cognition, and because mental motions result in passion, this passion could not be separated from the original mind.<sup>103</sup> For Chrysippus, all emotion was mistaken judgement, but later readers of Stoicism, like Seneca, argued that emotion is mistaken judgment that still seeks reason.<sup>104</sup> In this later philosophical development, mental movements were distinguished into three movements, and while the first two movements are involuntary reactions,

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the former arguing for absolute unity in the virtues, and the latter allowing plurality, just as Irenaeus argues for unity of God while his opponents argue for a multiplicity of Aeons. Malcom Schoffield, "Stoic Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. B. Inwood (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), esp. 247–253. For a parallel between discussions of virtue ethics and divine simplicity, see Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, "Gregory of Nyssa on the Reciprocity of the Virtues," *JTS* 58, no. 2 (2007).

102 For a summary of the terms *affectio* and *passio* in ancient discussions on emotion, particularly Cicero, see Michael W. Champion et al., "But Were They Talking about Emotions? *Affectus*, *Affectio* and the History of Emotions," *Revista storica italiana* 128 (2016); Rita Copeland, "*Affectio-Affectus* in Latin Rhetoric up to c. 1200," in *Before emotion: the language of feeling, 400–1800*, ed. F.J. Ruys, M.W. Champion, and K. Essary (New York: Routledge, 2019).

103 According to Richard Sorabji, in antiquity as a whole, emotion was cognition, so this Stoic terminology became the foundation of ensuing doxographical summaries and medical and philosophical debates, often linking thought with affect. Sorabji, *Emotion and the Peace of Mind: from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, 17–28. For a study that starts from the mind, rather than emotion, see Christopher Shields, "Theories of Mind in the Hellenistic Period," in *A History of the Mind and Body in Late Antiquity*, ed. A. Marmodoro and S. Cartwright (Cambridge: CUP, 2018).

104 Richard Sorabji, "What is New on Emotion in Stoicism after 100 BC?," in *Greek and Roman Philosophy 100 BC–200 AD*, ed. R. Sorabji and R. Sharples (Institute of Classical Studies: University of London, 2007), 168–169.

including pre-emotions (προπάθειαι), the third movement is the will's decision to abandon reason in favour of a mistaken judgment and passion.<sup>105</sup> In theory, this would separate the Mind and certain mental movements from passion. In his system, neither pre-emotions (1st movements)<sup>106</sup> nor movements that are born or eradicated by deliberation (*judicium*: 2nd movements) should be labelled as *adfectus*, but only movements that arise out of the will and ignored reason (3rd movements).<sup>107</sup> As Seneca argues: "[first movements] are not passion but the first preludes to passion .... The term 'passion' should be applied to none of these responses that merely chance to move the mind: the mind doesn't so much cause them as suffer them."<sup>108</sup> The second movement, *judicium*, is the movement immediately prior to passion, and it parallels Irenaeus' *consilium*.<sup>109</sup> These two movements would characterise the Stoic Sage who had

105 See Rist, *Stoic Philosophy*, 33–36 for a discussion on the relationship between thought and speech, particularly in Chrysippus and Zeno, who argue that one cannot have activity without πάθη. For distinguishing movements, see Sorabji, *Emotion and the Peace of Mind: from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, 55–75.

106 These first movements were called a first shock (*ictus*), a first agitation (*agitatio*), and a first movement (*primus motus*). See Seneca, *On Anger*, 2.2.2; 2.2.4; 2.3.1; 2.3.4; 2.3.5; 2.4.1; 2.4.2. For these references, and a helpful discussion, see Sorabji, *Emotion and the Peace of Mind: from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, 66–75. The "first-movements" of the soul may have first been referenced by Cicero. See Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.82–83. See Sorabji, "What is New on Emotion in Stoicism after 100 BC?," 1168.

107 For a description of Seneca's third movements, see Sorabji, *Emotion and the Peace of Mind: from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, 61–63. On the other hand, characters like Galen or Aristotle would point to psychological examples where first movement sometimes occur involuntarily and without the intellect (*Nous*). See Aristotle, *On the Movements of Animals*, 11.703b; Sorabji, *Emotion and the Peace of Mind: from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, 71–72.

108 Seneca, *De Ira* 2.2.5, 2.3.1 (LCL 214.170). John W. Basore, ed., *Seneca: De Providentia. De Constantia. De Ira. De Clementia*, 3 vols., LCL 214 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928). Translation from Robert A. Kaster and Martha C. Nussbaum, eds., *Seneca: Anger, Mercy, Revenge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 35. *sed omnia ista motus sunt animorum moveri nolentium nec adfectus sed principia proludentia adfectibus .... Nihil ex his, quae animum fortuito impellunt, adfectus vocari debet; ista, ut ita dicam, patitur magis animus quam facit ...*

109 *Consilium*, which appears in both of Irenaeus' lists of mental motions, can be paralleled with Seneca's account, where, rather than being ruled by affect (*adfectus*) through philosophy, the reader can be ruled by reason (*ratio*), so that, precisely through forethought (*consilium*) the reader can avoid impulse (*impetus*) and being carried away (*fero*). See Seneca, *ep.* 37 (LCL 75.252–257). Richard M. Gummere, ed., *Seneca: Epistles*, vol. 1, LCL 75 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917). Rousseau's retroverted Greek equates *consilium* with βουλή, which would place it closer to the 3rd movement. This second movement is similar to Cicero's description of grief, which includes a reference to the first bites of the first movement and which occur independent of judgement (introduced as *judi-*

achieved *eupatheia* or *apatheia*, and would differentiate them from a person with mental motions that result in passion. Cognition and emotion remained linked, but this philosophical development made it possible for the mind and the first movements of the mind to avoid or be separated from affect.<sup>110</sup>

Irenaeus' list describes motions of the mind of a person before *adfectus* and *passiones*, similar to Seneca's first and second movements, except that he rejects ascribing even this process, to God. Irenaeus argues that Stoic psychological language cannot be applied to metaphysics because within that framework (as he sees it), the end result cannot be separated from the initial cause. Irenaeus' opponents were trying to describe a passion that caused material creation without reflecting back on the Mind of God, thereby separating God's Mind from creation. Based on Seneca's organisation and Irenaeus' list of mental motions, Irenaeus' opponents attributed something like the third movement to only one of God's lower powers (Wisdom), but not to God's Mind. Irenaeus argues that the human mind is the source of all mental motions, so any passion in the third movement reflects that mind. Even if Irenaeus' opponents depended on the kind of philosophical development found in Seneca, when applied to God, these separate mental movements still imply separation and division in God.<sup>111</sup> While Irenaeus and his opponents agree that human passion should not be ascribed to God's mind, Irenaeus opposes using the Stoic language of mental movements because of the creator/creature differentiation undergirded by the notion of divine simplicity. God cannot be compared to a composite human with a mental process that has parts, since, as he goes on to state, God is simple, and this process of mental motions still results in affect and passion.

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*cium* or *opinio* or described with *decernere*) which then leads to distress. Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.83 (LCL 141.322). J.E. King, ed., *Cicero: Tusculan Disputations*, LCL 141 (Harvard University Press, 1927). For the paralleling of Cicero and Seneca on this point, see Sorabji, "What is New on Emotion in Stoicism after 100 BC?," 167–168.

110 See Ch. 1 in Sorabji, *Emotion and the Peace of Mind: from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, 17–28.

111 Sorabji has argued that Seneca's argument was first adopted by Origen for instruction on resisting temptation. See Richard Sorabji, "Stoic First Movements in Christianity," in *Stoicism: Traditions and Transformations*, ed. S. Strange and J. Zupko (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 95–107. Stoicism described the mental process primarily in relation to the four general emotions (distress, pleasure, fear, and appetite). See especially chapter 2 in Sorabji, *Emotion and the Peace of Mind: from Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, 29–54. Based on *haer.* 2.13.1–3a, I suggest that this Stoic language had already been adopted by various groups for metaphysics, rather than ethics, by the time of Irenaeus. However, he rejects using Stoic language to describe God because he holds to a Middle Platonist concept of simplicity that requires a differentiation between creator and creatures.



### 2.1.3 *Haer.* 2.13.8: Metaphors for God

After his definition of divine simplicity, Irenaeus argues that metaphors, including the spoken word, cannot be univocally applied to God, again adhering to the creator/creature differentiation. In scripture, God is described through metaphors from creation, such as a spoken word and emitted light, but Irenaeus insists that God is not similar to what is created, thus revealing a tension in language about God:

He is both beyond these [*sensus, spiritus, sensuabilitas, ennoia, lumen* etc.] and on account of this indescribable. It will be appropriate and right that he be called Mind who contains all things, but not similar to the thinking of humans. He will be most appropriately called Light, but nothing like light according to us. Indeed, in this regard, in all remaining ways the Father of all will not be at all similar to the insignificance of humans.

Est autem et super haec, et propter hoc inenarrabilis. Sensus enim capax omnium bene ac recte dicitur, sed non similis hominum sensui; et lumen rectissime dicitur, sed nihil simile ei quod est secundum nos lumini. Sic autem et in reliquis omnibus nulli similis erit omnium Pater hominum pusillitati.<sup>112</sup>

God is not similar to the smallness experienced by humans, and human process, passion, and division cannot be applied to language about God. To apply human language to God in the same way as it is applied to humans is to apply to God the nature of what is created. Irenaeus goes further, arguing that discourse about God's powers cannot have the kind of generation or activity as a human, and he reveals that the reason for this is divine simplicity:

They say that Word and Life, which they say are the ones who create in this Pleroma, were emitted, and as to the *Logos*, i.e. the Word, indeed they are taking the emission from human affection and divinising it against God, as if they were discovering something great when they say that Word was sent by Thought. Everyone knows this naturally, since it may be logically said about people, but in him who is God over all, since he is all Thought and all Word, in the way we have said above, not having in himself something older, nor younger, nor something other, but remaining all equal and similar and one.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>112</sup> *haer.* 2.13.4 (SC 294.116).

<sup>113</sup> Ablatives *habente* and *perseuerante* cannot be inserted into the English sense of this translation. For a similar translation, see Unger (SC 65.45) and page 131–132, n. 20.

Ab hoc enim Logon et Zoen fabricatores huius Pleromatis dicunt emissos, et Logi, id est Verbi, quidem emissionem ab hominum adfectione accipientes et addiunantes aduersus Deum, quasi aliquid magnum adinuinentes in eo quod dicunt a Nu esse emissum Logon. Quod quidem omnes uidelicet sciunt, quoniam in hominibus quidem consequenter dicatur; in eo autem qui sit super omnes Deus, totus Nus et totus Logos cum sit, quemadmodum praediximus, et neque aliud antiquius, neque posterius aut aliud alterius habente in se, sed toto aequali et simili et uno perseuerante.<sup>114</sup>

When his opponents use the terminology *Nous* and *Logos*, it might work if speaking about composite humans, but these terms have a different meaning for God. After stating that description of mental motions cannot be ascribed to God *because* God is simple, he returns to the language of God as “all Thought and all Word” and God as “equal and similar and one” from his definition of divine simplicity. Because God is simple, the meaning of these words, when describing human generation and activity, cannot be ascribed to God. He has already argued that the process of human thinking and speaking cannot be applied to God (in *haer.* 2.13.1–3a), and he will argue that the process of human generation cannot be applied to God (in *haer.* 2.17).<sup>115</sup> Normal rules of language do not apply because this language, albeit scriptural, is describing God. Instead, as argued in the second parameter on language about God, while God is not *similar* to processes of word and light experienced by humans, God is *similar* and *equal* to himself (see *haer.* 2.13.3 and 2.13.8). Language about God must only be understood in comparison to God himself.

## 2.2 *Parameter 2: God's Mutually Entailing Names and Powers*

According to the second parameter, discourse regarding God's names and powers should be mutually entailing. First, Irenaeus argues that God's powers cannot be contrary or mutually exclusive (*haer.* 2.12). Then, Irenaeus explains that God as “all sight, all thought, all hearing” means that God's seeing and hearing or God as Thought and Word must be understood in terms of one another, and he labels “Life, Incorruption, and Truth” as powers and titles of God that are heard together (*coobaudiuntur* in *haer.* 2.13.8–9). Scholars have argued that

<sup>114</sup> *haer.* 2.13.8 (SC 294.122–124).

<sup>115</sup> For discussion on divine generation and its dependence on divine simplicity, see Chapter 4 below, and Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 121–135.

for Irenaeus these powers are “identical,” but this underemphasises the distinction retained in Irenaeus’ argument. My terminology of “mutually entailing” is based on Irenaeus’ statement that God’s powers are always “with God” and “heard together” with God’s titles.

### 2.2.1 *Haer.* 2.12: Mutually Exclusive or United Powers of God

Irenaeus challenges the view of powers in his opponent’s system, since their thirty Aeons consist of various contrary powers that are separated. Instead, he argues that the powers of God should be understood as united and mutually entailing. As mentioned above, in philosophy, some had begun moving away from the standard procedure of describing God through opposites, and they based their arguments on Xenophanes, the very author used in Irenaeus’ definition of divine simplicity.<sup>116</sup> After setting out his four definitions of oneness and simplicity in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle defines things that are similar and things that are contrary, and while most things are a composite of two extremes (i.e. hot and cold; light and dark), first principles are not composed of contraries, for they are simple.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, Irenaeus argues that contrary powers, like light and darkness, are mutually exclusive and both cannot exist in God. If an Aeon is unified (*adunatam*), and from a conjugal couple that was united and inseparable and one (*ab unita coniugatione et inseparabili et una*), and the emission was indistinguishable and united (*indiscretam et unitam*), then this Aeon could not be dissimilar (*dissimilis*) to the source that sent it out (*haer.* 2.12.2). When describing Aeons like Mind and Truth, one cannot understand one without the other (*non possit alterum sine altero intellegi*), which he illustrates by showing that water cannot be understood without moisture, fire without heat, or a stone without hardness, “because they are united (*unita sunt*), one with another, and cannot be separated, but always coexist (*semper coexistere*) with them.”<sup>118</sup> Aeons must be united and always exist together, so they are distinct in unity. This same kind of language of unity is repeated in *haer.* 2.12.4, specifically in reference to Thought, Mind, Truth, and Word. God’s powers cannot be conceived separately, so God’s powers cannot be described through the language of mutually exclusive or contrary powers. In his opponents’ system, Word and Silence, or Light and Darkness were four separate Aeons, but Irenaeus argues that Silence and Darkness would

116 For discussion, see discussion in Chapter 2, section 1.1, especially footnote 43.

117 For examples, see *met.* X.4–5, 1055a–1056b and XI.1, 1059a.

118 *haer.* 2.12.2 (SC 294.98–100). Quemadmodum neque aqua sine humectatione, neque ignis sine calore, neque lapis sine durtia—unita sunt enim inuicem haec et alterum ab altero separari non potest, sed semper coexistere ei.

be destroyed (*consumptibilia*) and dispelled (*solutae sunt; soluetur*) when Word and Light were emitted, and so, because mutually exclusive Aeons do not entail one another, they cannot both be powers of God.<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, he challenges the claim that Silence is in the highest level of the Pleroma, since even they claim that there is an interior and exterior Word (*Logos endiathetos* and *Logos prophorikos*), and either emitted Word would destroy Silence and their first and principle Ogdoad.<sup>120</sup> Irenaeus also adheres to linguistic parameters when challenging his opponent's view of opposite and mutually exclusive powers. He goes on to outline how this parameter, which requires that God's powers be mutually entailing, is used constructively in his own system.

## 2.2.2 *Haer.* 2.13.8–9 Labelling God's Mutually Entailing Names and Powers

After the definition of divine simplicity, Irenaeus explains the meaning of God as “all” Thought and Word, arguing that God's names and powers are not separated by time, since nothing in God is older or younger (*neque aliud antiquius, neque posterius aut aliud antierius*), and they cannot be understood apart from each other, since they remain “equal and similar and one” (*toto aequali et simili et uno*). Rather, they are understood in light of one another.

Just as a person would not sin if he says he [God is] “all sight and all hearing,” so that, in the way he sees he also hears, and in the way he hears he also sees, so too for the person who said, “all Thought and all Word,” so that in the way he is Thought, in this same way he is Word, and that his Word is this Mind. This person will know just a little bit of the Father of All, but still much more appropriately than those who are transferring the

119 *haer.* 2.12.5 (SC 294.102–104).

120 *Logos endiathetos* remains a central part of his discussion, and is contrasted with *Logos prophorikos* in 2.13.2 (*emisibilis*), 2.13.8 (*prolatus*), and *haer.* 2.28.6 (*verbum emisionis*). See Unger and Dillon, *ACW* 65, 128–129, n. 10. According to Harvey, this is the earliest Patristic use of the term *Logos endiathetos*. See Harvey, *Santi Irenaei episcopi Lugdunensis libros quinque adversus haereses*, 1.278, n. 2. For a summary on the Stoic and Aristotelian background, see Elisabetta Matelli, “ἐνδιάθετος εἰς προφορικὸς λόγος: Note sulla origine della formula e della nozione,” *Aevum* 66, no. 1 (1992). For a summary of the usage in Philo, see the introduction in Adam Kamesar, “The *Logos Endiathetos* and the *Logos Prophorikos* in Allegorical Interpretation: Philo and the D-Scholia to the *Iliad*,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 44, no. 2 (2004). The pairing of the First and Principle Ogdoad, which is *primam et principalem Ogdoad* (*haer.* 2.12.6) was a doubling for the Stoic *hegemonikon* in section 2.1.2 above.

generation of an uttered human word to the Eternal Word of God, giving [him] a beginning and origin of utterance as with one's own word.

Quemadmodum qui dicit eum—totum uisionem et totum auditum—in quo autem uidet, in ipso et audit, et in quo audit, in ipso et uidet—non peccat: sic et qui ait, illum totum Sensum et totum Verbum, et in quo Sensus est in hoc et Verbum esse, et Verbum esse eius hunc Nun, minus quidem adhuc de Patre omnium sentiet, decentiora autem magis quam hi qui generationem prolatiui hominum uerbi transferunt in Dei aeternum Verbum, et prolationis initium donantes et genesim, quemadmodum et suo uerbo.<sup>121</sup>

Irenaeus explains his citation of Xenophanes by interweaving refutation and affirmation. Irenaeus primarily opposes (1) chronological hierarchy in God, for there was never a time when God was without his Thought (Life in *haer.* 2.13.9), and (2) hierarchy of action, for in the way God sees, he also hears.<sup>122</sup> This means that language about God cannot describe a time or an activity of God without these powers and titles. This opposes the kind of order found in *Eugnostos the Blessed*, which also describes God as all Mind, Thought, Reflection, Consideration, Reason, and Power, but each Aeon is generated in order “from first to last.”<sup>123</sup> Irenaeus’ explanation of “all Word” opposes the kind of use that results in hierarchy. For Irenaeus, not only is the terminology important, it must be used in such a way that God’s activity of hearing and seeing and God’s powers of Thought and Word each entail the others.

After repeatedly arguing that his opponents speak wrongly of God, he has here provided a more appropriate way for a person to speak about God: a person should not only use the phrasing of God as “all” sight, hearing, thought, and word, but that person should also mean that these names and powers are mutually entailing. This person still knows insufficiently, but more appropriately. Irenaeus is concerned with right terminology *and* how this terminology is used. Beyond just refutation, he argues that God’s activity of sight entails hearing and God’s power of Thought entails his Word, for God is all Thought and Word. Some scholars have described Irenaeus’ view of God’s powers and titles as either identical or homogenous, but it seems more precise to acknowledge

121 *haer.* 2.13.8. (SC 294.124).

122 See Plato’s *Protagoras*, and the discussion hearing and seeing in Michel Barnes, *The Power of God: Dynamis in Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 68.

123 *Eug.* NHC III.73.3–16 (NHC 3.58–60); Meyer, *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, 277.

a sense of distinction. In his system, God's Thought informs our understanding of God's Word, but they are not conflated. This nuance is supported by the rest of Irenaeus' explanation, where these titles and powers are labelled and described as always with God and heard together.<sup>124</sup>

God is Life and Incorruption and Truth. Not according to growth/decrease<sup>125</sup> of the kind they sent with the emissions, but the titles of their powers are those who are always with God, in whatever way it is possible and right for humans to speak and hear about God. For Thought, Word, Life, Incorruption, Truth, Wisdom, Good, and all other [powers] are heard together<sup>126</sup> with the titles of God. For neither is it possible to say that Life is older than Thought, for Life is itself Thought; nor that Life was after Thought, since he who is all Thought, that is God, is not at any time made to be without Life.

Deus uita est et incorruptela et ueritas. Et non secundum descensionem ea quae sunt talia acceperunt emissiones, sed earum virtutum quae semper sunt cum Deo appellationes sunt, quemadmodum possibile est et

124 Rousseau back-translates this to be δύνάμις (SC 293.251). For the Armenian, titled Fr. Arm. 2 in Rousseau, see Fragment 8 in Charles Renoux, ed., *Irénee de Lyon: Nouveaux fragments arméniens de l'Adversus Haereses et de l'Epidexis*, PO 178 (39.1) (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978), 38–39.

125 Rousseau compares *secundum descensionem* with ըստ ածման լինելութեանն (SC 293.251) to argue that the Latin translator interpolated the original from “growth” to “descension”. It should be noted that there seems to be an error in the text of Rousseau, for the Armenian is actually ըստ աճման լինելութեանն. See Renoux, PO 178 (39.1). The term he seems to desire, աճումն, does indeed mean growth or increase, and in Reyners, the definition is “augmentum” or “incrementum”, but no Greek parallel is given (the erroneous term Rousseau has in his text, ածեմ, means “accingo, aduco, adtraho, cingo, deduco, duco, immitto, produco”). See Reyners, *Lexique comparé*, 1.105–106. According to Rousseau, the translator read ἐπογενή, and could not believe this should be growth or development, so he used κατ’ ἐπογενήν, and changed increase in the Greek for decrease in the Latin, which is supported by the Armenian. Unger follows this same phrasing (ACW 65.46) and page 132 n. 24. *Descensionem* is found throughout the text, so to change this to “increase” (following the Armenian) here would have implications on the other six times this word is used in Latin (*haer.* 1.30.13, 14; 2.6.1; 2.13.6; 3.10.4; 3.34.4). For the Armenian, titled Fr. Arm. 2 in Rousseau, see Fragment 8 in Renoux, PO 178 (39.1), 38–39.

126 *coobaudiuntur* in S and followed in Rousseau (SC 294.126), *coobaudientur* in CVAQ and followed by Hv 2.16.5 (1.285). *eo obaudient* is in ε, but the need for the presence of the prefix “co” is affirmed by the Armenian միանգամ, which seems to just carry the sense of “at once” or “in one blow.”

dignum hominibus audire et dicere de Deo. Appellationi enim Dei coobaudiuntur sensus et uerbum et uita et incorruptela et ueritas et sapientia et bonitas et omnia talia. Et neque sensum uita antiquiorem aliquis potest dicere, ipse enim sensus uita est; neque uitam posteriorem a sensu, uti non fiat aliquando sine uita is qui est omnium sensus, hoc est Deus.<sup>127</sup>

Once again Irenaeus opposes the hierarchy of his opponents, but he does so by claiming that God's titles and powers are heard together so that any understanding of God based on one of these titles or powers depends on the others. They cannot be understood apart from each other (with one power creating apart from the rest) nor are they mutually exclusive (with both light and darkness as divine powers). The terminology "mutually entailing" is inferred from both of these above statements, but also from his affirmation that God's powers are always "with God" and "heard together" (*coobaudiuntur*) with God's titles. This Latin term *coobaudiuntur* does not appear elsewhere in extant Latin literature, and it is used by the translator to convey the meaning of a Greek compound, probably *συνακούω* as Rousseau back-translates it.<sup>128</sup> In the Armenian, the preposition is linked to a noun, stating that "with God's title/name" (ընդ անուանն Աստուծոյ) is heard Life, Incorruption and Truth, the same structure used to say that *with* God are his titles (ընդ Աստուծոյն են անուանք).<sup>129</sup> The translators of the Armenian and Latin were careful to carry the distinction communicated by the preposition from the Greek compound.

My reading of this passage, and of this *hapax legomenon*, pushes against Christopher Stead and Anthony Briggman, who interpret this section to mean that God's powers and names are *identical* with God,<sup>130</sup> and the reading of Eric Osborn, who describe God's titles and powers as homogenous.<sup>131</sup> "Identical"

<sup>127</sup> *haer.* 2.13.9 (SC 294.126).

<sup>128</sup> As early as 1890, scholars have argued against Harvey's adjustment of the Latin to *consentient* in order to support the presence of the Greek term *συνφωνέω*, though it must be admitted that the theme of "harmonizing" (*consonans*) is prominent in Irenaeus' text. Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 293, 251; Harvey, *Santi Irenaei episcopi Lugdunensis libros quinque adversus haereses*, 1.285, n. 7. In his theological summary of this section, Kunze argues against Harvey's adjustment. Unger's translation also argues that the context of this passage does not support this change. Briggman follows Unger. Kunze, *Die Gotteslehre de Irenaeus*, 37, n. 3; Unger and Dillon, ACW 65, 132–133; Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 96, n. 131. According to the TLG, there is no use of *συνακούω* in extant Greek fragments of Irenaeus, while *συνφωνέω* appears once (2.28.3).

<sup>129</sup> See Fragment 8 in Renoux, PO 178 (39.1), 38–39.

<sup>130</sup> Stead, *Divine Substance*, 188–189; Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 96–97.

<sup>131</sup> Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 39–41.

rightly emphasises Irenaeus' opposition to hierarchy in God, while "homogenous" rightly emphasises God as all Thought and Word, but they lack a sense of distinction. As this book develops, I will bolster my claim by pointing to other places where Irenaeus applies this linguistic parameter, though this same term will not reappear. For example, God's powers are described as "similar" and not "same" (in *haer.* 2.18.5, for discussion see Chapter 4, Section 3), and God's Power, Wisdom and Goodness are shown to be the "displayed together" (*simul ... ostenditur*; ὁμοῦ ... δεῖκνυται in *haer.* 4.38.3, for discussion see Chapter 6, Section 2.2). These suggest a continuing emphasis on distinction in unity. In this argument for language about God, the many scriptural powers and names of God are not the same thing, but they say different things about the same God. These names and powers of God do not carry a meaning that is similar to humans, but only similar to God himself, so they should be understood in light of each other. Instead of a strict apophaticism (as in Clement), Irenaeus opts for an approach that allows something to be said about God based on scriptural language.

### 3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined Irenaeus' definition of divine simplicity and argued that the concept of divine simplicity guides possible meanings for language about God. I explored philosophical and scriptural contexts for divine simplicity, and analysed how Irenaeus' thought related to his contemporaries among different Christian groups. The concepts behind key terms, such as *simplex*, *non compositus*, *similis*, and *totus*, are congruent with his contemporaries and predecessors. While the term *simplex* rarely appears in the rest of *Against Heresies*, the argument and the terminology used to explain it remain prominent. For example, his citation of Xenophanes' anti-anthropomorphic concept of God as "all mind and all thought," does reappear regularly, and remains key for Irenaeus' description of God. His definition and explanation in *haer.* 2.13 emphasised that God's powers could not be separated from God, so he insists (alongside earlier thinkers) that God is simple, without parts, unable to be measured, and without contraries or change. This argument remains central to *Against Heresies*. Thinkers like Tatian, Ptolemy, Clement, and the author of *Eugnostos the Blessed* were also engaging in language of God as simple or God as entirely mind and thought, but Irenaeus' account of simplicity has distinctive contours. Because they shared this terminology, Irenaeus was not just interested in the terminology itself, but he requires a particular meaning. Unlike these writers, for Irenaeus, the simple God has distinctive powers but does not



generate powers that are dissimilar or mutually exclusive. Furthermore, Irenaeus opts against apophaticism, insisting that though insufficient, there are more appropriate ways to speak about God.

The second part of this chapter specified two parameters on language about God that result from divine simplicity, namely, because God is simple, what is said about God cannot be understood in relation to humans (Parameter 1), but rather, in relation to God himself, so God's names and powers are mutually entailing (Parameter 2). In adhering to the creator/creature differentiation, Irenaeus rejects the possibility of transferring Stoic psychological mental motions for human speech and cognition across to God. Even though the metaphors "thought" and "word" are scriptural, and so are part of Irenaeus' lexicon in understanding God, he opposes ways this language could lead to separation, as in his opponents' theology. Irenaeus claims that implications of metaphors from creation, such as thinking, cannot be ascribed to God because God is simple, so God's thought must be understood in light of simplicity. His arguments against ascribing affect or passions to God sits within this framework. According to the second parameter, language of God as "all" mind and word means that God is only comparable to himself, and so, God's names and powers are mutually entailing.

As we come to the end of Part 1, it may be helpful to provide some initial conclusions. First, though Book 2 is primarily negative polemic, it is not entirely negative polemic, and theological principles can be gleaned from it. In particular, Irenaeus' argument regarding God as the one creator, starting in the Rule of Truth and developed in Book 2, is given further clarity by the claim that God is simple. Secondly, though Irenaeus may not be labelled as a philosopher, he engaged with pre-Socratic and Stoic arguments and their development in Middle Platonism. He cares about a right reading of philosophy as it applies to scriptural language. Instead of ascribing to God the composite process of human mental motions and affect from Stoicism, Irenaeus depends on the Middle Platonist description of God as simple through the pre-Socratic language of God as "all" thought and word. His usage of pre-Socratic language in an argument about divine simplicity (a concept more at home in Middle Platonism) presents a reading of the scriptural God that engages second-century debates. Rather than discarding his opponents' use of philosophy, he appropriated many of the same terms and concepts to argue for the particular way these terms and concepts should be used in relation to God.

It remains to be seen how the terminology and arguments used to explain divine simplicity work out in the rest of Irenaeus' work. That is the key aim of Part 2. My argument touched upon important strands of Irenaeus' theology, without which this definition cannot be correctly understood and which bol-

ster my claim that Irenaeus' principle of divine simplicity interwove scripture, philosophy, and contemporary Christian debates. References were made to Irenaeus' view that the creator is "containing, not contained," to God's Word and Wisdom (which elsewhere are described as the "Hands of God," the Son and Spirit), and to God's names and powers. While Part 1 progressively focused on Irenaeus' definition of divine simplicity, Part 2 will zoom out and demonstrate how the terminology and arguments from this definition influence Irenaeus' wider theological efforts in the rest of *Against Heresies*.



**PART 2**

*Theological Implications of Divine Simplicity*





## Divine Will for Creation in the Containment Metaphor of *Haer.* 2.1–6

In Part 2 I explore the implications of divine simplicity on Irenaeus' wider theology, and start with divine will in the activity of creating. The recurring metaphor of containment, sometimes summarised in the formula "containing, not contained," is prominent throughout Irenaeus' theology of creation.<sup>1</sup> William Schoedel has argued that the metaphor is primarily spatial and temporal, expressing the tension that God is both everywhere and nowhere, and God is beyond time but acting in time.<sup>2</sup> More recently, Briggman has also emphasised the cognitive meaning for this metaphor, implying God knows all things, but is incomprehensible.<sup>3</sup> I argue that, in addition to these helpful readings, the metaphor of containment has providential implications for God's power, implying that God is sovereign over creation and not restricted by something beyond Godself. Irenaeus uses the metaphor of containment, guided by the concept of divine simplicity, to describe the divine will as inseparable from and simultaneous with the activity of creation. This chapter will first summarise the spatial, temporal, and cognitive associations of this metaphor, and then focus on how it is used to characterise divine providence. Irenaeus' argument for God's providential will in creation depends on his account of divine simplicity.

In the first half of Book 2 (*haer.* 2.1–2.19), Irenaeus rejects his opponents' creation account, including their demiurge, which he calls the chief topic (*capitulum*) on which their entire system rests. Then he summarises his own view of the creator:

Therefore, it is good for us to have to begin from the first and greatest chapter, from the Demiurge [Creator] God, who made heaven and earth and all that is in them (cf. Ex 20:11; Ps 145[146]:6; Jn 1:3; Acts 4:24; 14:15),

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- 1 Greer sees this metaphor as the concise definition of Irenaeus' theological premise in Book 2. See Greer, "The Dog and the Mushrooms: Irenaeus's view of the Valentinians Assessed," 156.
  - 2 Schoedel, "Enclosing, not Enclosed: The early Doctrine of God," 78–79. See also, Norris, "Who Is the Demiurge?," 28.
  - 3 See Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, especially pp. 72–89.

whom these blasphemers say is the fruit of the outer boundary,<sup>4</sup> and to show that there is not another either above him nor after him, nor was he moved by another, but rather, he made everything freely and by his own will, since he is the only God and only Lord and only Maker and only Father and the only one who contains all things, and he himself gives existence to all things.

Bene igitur habet a primo et maximo capitulo inchoare nos, a Demiurgo Deo, qui fecit caelum et terram et omnia quae in eis sunt, quem hi blasphemantes extremitatis fructum dicunt, et ostendere quoniam neque super eum neque post eum est aliquid, neque ab aliquo motus sed sua sententia et libere fecit omnia, cum sit solus Deus et solus Dominus et solus Conditor et solus Pater et solus continens omnia et omnibus ut sint ipse praestans.<sup>5</sup>

The terminology of a “containing, not contained” God had become common in second-century Christian discourse.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Irenaeus knew that several of his opponents described God in this way (see *haer.* 1.1.1), and though he acknowledges their distinctive views, here he claims that they all have the same weakness: in an effort to preserve God from the stain of corruption, they unsuccessfully attempt to describe the activity of creation beyond God.<sup>7</sup> However,

4 Unger (ACW 65.17) translates this as “degeneracy”.

5 *haer.* 2.1.1 (SC 294.26). For a discussion on the relationship between this passage and terminology of the rule, see Chapter 1, section 3, especially footnote 23.

6 The Shepherd of Hermas starts with the single creator, “who contains all things, and is Himself contained by no one.” Hermas, *Mand.* 1.1. Πρώτον πάντων πίστευσον ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός ὁ τὰ πάντα κτίσας καὶ καταρτίσας καὶ ποιήσας ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι τὰ πάντα καὶ πάντα χωρῶν μόνος δὲ ἀχώρητος ὢν. The idea of a God who encloses (ἐμπεριεχόμενος) and contains (χωροῦν) all is also found in Theophilus’s *ad Autolycum* 1.5 and 2.3. Athenagoras asks if the God without parts is in (ἐν) around (περί) or beyond (ἀνωτέρω) the world, arguing that these things would contain (περιορίζω and κατεχῶ) God in the world (see *leg.* 8). The metaphor of containment is also used in the *Teachings of Silvanus* with a spatial and cognitive sense, and in *A Valentinian Exposition*, which repeatedly refers to the uncontainable God. The Hermetic corpus describes God as capable of containing, but not as place (see 2.6), Mind containing all things (2.12), and the Monad containing all number but contained by none (4.10). It also contains creed-like statements referring to God as maker, father, and container of the universe (16.3). See Brian P. Copenhaver, ed., *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995).

7 In *haer.* 2.1.4 and 2.3.1, Irenaeus discusses the good God of Marcion, in *haer.* 2.2.3 he opposes Basilides and his system of angel-creators in the 365 layers of heaven; and in *haer.* 2.4.1 he names both Ptolemy and Heracleon as followers of Valentinus to challenge their system with a *Pleroma* and its 30 Aeons. For the Valentinian school, see Markschies, “Valentinian Gnosti-

his opponents' usage does not deter him, for Irenaeus himself uses this formula to explore the tension between God's transcendence and immanence.<sup>8</sup> He depends on various meanings of the containment metaphor, associated with a variety of Latin terms (*continere*, *finire*, *includere*, *capere*, *circumcontinere*, *circumscribere*, *circumfinire*, and *circumdare*) that describe this one God as the creator who contains everything, including creation.<sup>9</sup>

## 1 Spatial Meaning of "Containing, Not Contained"

The metaphor of containment is itself spatial. Irenaeus claims that, because they argue for a creation outside or beyond God (with *deorsum*, *superiora*, *praeter*, or *extra*), the primary cause of everything is spatially contained in the system of his opponents. The spatial implications of this metaphor had a philosophical precedent. Pre-Socratic Eleatics like Xenophanes and later texts, like ps-Aristotle's *De Melisso*, *Xenophane*, and *Gorgia*, applied spatial and temporal limitations to the One (see in Melissus fr. 2–6), but scholars claim that the best comparison with Irenaeus comes from Philo. He is the first extant author to

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cism: toward the Anatomy of a School." This joint reference to Ptolemy and Heracleon comes just after a citation of John 1:3, which is present in Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* and in Heracleon's commentary on John. Lastly, it has been shown that Irenaeus had some kind of a version of the *Apocryphon of John* at the end of Book 1. While in his systematic summary of it (in *haer.* 1.29–30) he excludes references to the Sethian god who is "containing, not contained," I do not believe that it is because "[Irenaeus] would be only too anxious to omit any Gnostic negative theology which echoed such a theme" as Logan claims, but rather, by the start of Book 2, he views this formula as a weakness common to the various systems of many of his opponents. Logan, *Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy*, 75. Because of the different named positions, and because of the relevance of the *Apocryphon of John*, I argue that Book 2 should be read with an "inlay technique" of these different systems, for Irenaeus believes that the "containing, not contained" God in creation is the weakest point in the systems of many of his opponents, and so he alternates between them and applies his criticisms corporately to their different systems. Chiapparini uses the terminology "inlay technique" to describe the way Irenaeus interweaves different systems in his argument against the Ptolemean literature with oral sources in the "Grand Notice," particularly in *haer.* 1.6. Giuliano Chiapparini, "Irenaeus and the Gnostic Valentinus: Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Church of Rome around the Middle of the Second Century," *ZAC* 18, no. 1 (2013): 103–105.

- 8 As far back as Schoedel, but also in more recent readings, such as that of Briggman, scholars have read this passage as exploring the tension of God's transcendence and immanence. Schoedel, "Enclosing, not Enclosed: The early Doctrine of God.," Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 72–79, 87–90.
- 9 Creation accounts in antiquity often used a variety of verbs to describe containment in creation. Plato uses *περιλαμβάνω*, *συνίστημι*, and *περιέχω* together to argue that the Living Thing (*ζῶον*) and the universe contain the best form of everything. See *Tim.* 30D–31B.



apply the actual formula “containing, not contained” to descriptions of God,<sup>10</sup> illustrating that God is immaterial and not in a place.<sup>11</sup> Philo argues that when Adam hides from God in Genesis 3:8, he confines God to space, imagining that “God is in a place, not enclosing but enclosed.”<sup>12</sup> This background has led scholars to read the following section of Irenaeus’ text as a refutation of the application of spatiality to God.<sup>13</sup>

For likewise, according to them, they say that something outside the Pleroma descended, which they believe is a higher wandering Power. It is necessary that either, [Option 1] what is outside contains, and [therefore] the Pleroma is contained, since otherwise [the power] would not be outside the Pleroma. For if anything is outside the Pleroma, the Pleroma will be inside the thing which they are saying was outside the Pleroma, and the Pleroma would be contained by what is outside. Or on the contrary, [Option 2] if the first God should be understood as the Pleroma, with the Pleroma and what is outside of it separated from each other by an immeasurable distance, and if this is indeed as they said, then there was a third thing which endlessly separated the Pleroma from that which was outside it, and this third encloses and will hold the other two together, and this third thing, that which is outside, will be greater than the Pleroma since it is containing both in its bosom.

Cum enim sit secundum eos et aliud quid quidem extra Pleroma esse dicunt, in quod et superiorem erraticam Virtutem descendisse opinantur, necesse est omni modo, aut continere id quod extra est, contineri autem Pleroma—alioquin non erit extra Pleroma: si enim extra Pleroma est aliquid, intra hoc ipsum quod extra Pleroma dicunt erit Pleroma, et continebitur Pleroma ab eo quod est extra; cum Pleromate autem subaudiatur et primus Deus—aut rursus in immensum distare et separata esse ab inuicem, id est et Pleroma et quod est extra illud. Si autem

10 Schoedel, “Enclosing, not Enclosed: The early Doctrine of God,” 76. For Irenaeus’ wider reliance on Xenophanes, see Chapter 2, section 1.

11 See *Migr.* 182; 192–193; *Somn.* 1.63; 1.185; *Sobr.* 83; *Post.* 15; 18. In Philo, God has no “where” and transcends the idea of space. See Norris, “Who Is the Demiurge?,” 17–19.

12 *Leg.* 3.2 (LCL 226.304) ὁ φαῦλος δοκεῖ εἶναι τὸν θεὸν ἐν τόπῳ, μὴ περιέχοντα, ἀλλὰ περιεχόμενον. See F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker, eds., *Philo: On the Creation. Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3*, LCL 226 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929).

13 Schoedel, “Enclosing, not Enclosed: The early Doctrine of God.”; Greer, “The Dog and the Mushrooms: Irenaeus’s view of the Valentinians Assessed.”; Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 55–61; Norris, “Who Is the Demiurge?,” 9–36; Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 71–89.

hoc dixerint, tertium quid erit, quod in immensum separat Pleroma et hoc quod est extra illud; et hoc tertium circumfinit<sup>14</sup> et continebit utraque, et erit maius tertium hoc et Pleromate et eo quod est extra illud, sicut in suo sinu continens utraque.<sup>15</sup>

This is but one of the many times that Irenaeus hypothetically grants the position of his opponents in order to challenge their logic. In this case, Irenaeus claims that one cannot describe God as “containing, not contained,” and claim creation occurred outside God. Norris argues for a spatial reading of this metaphor, challenging a creation outside the “territory” of the power of God (from *haer.* 2.1.5), by insisting that, “the categories of finite existence—spatial location, for example—do not fit God.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, Irenaeus is opposing the use of spatial language that implies a creation outside the *power* of God, because such a view descends into a polytheism that places the work of creation under the territory or power of a distinct god or Aeon. This spatial sense supports his claim that God himself created, and not another god, angel, or power.

## 2 Temporal Meaning of “Containing, Not Contained”

In *haer.* 2.1.2, Irenaeus questions the logic of the Valentinian myth by highlighting the temporal implications of containment:

If there is something else outside this [God], then the Pleroma is not all nor does it contain all, for they say [either] that he will be outside the Pleroma or that he who is above the God of All is outside him. However, this one who is absent and diminished by another, this is one not the Pleroma of all. [The genealogy] will have limits and a middle and an end, with regard to that which is outside him, if the end is in regard to those who are below and the beginning is in regard to those who are above him.

Si autem extra illum est aliquid, iam non omnium est Pleroma, neque continet omnia: deerit enim Pleromati aut ei qui sit super omnia Deo hoc quod extra eum dicunt. Quod autem deest et delibatum est ab ali-

14 *circumfinit* from CV ε, and followed by Hv 1.1.2 (Hv 1.252), *circumdefinit* in A, *circumdiffinit* in Q, and *circumdiffiniet* in S.

15 *haer.* 2.1.3 (SC 294.28–30).

16 Norris, “Who Is the Demiurge?,” 17–19.

quo, hoc non est omnium Pleroma. Et terminum autem et medietatem et finem habebit ad eos qui sunt extra eum. Si autem finis est in ea quae sunt deorsum, initium est et in ea quae sunt sursum.<sup>17</sup>

Irenaeus also applies these spatial prepositions to time, and he argues against the idea that God, or the Pleroma, has a beginning, middle, and end (*terminum et medietatem et finem*; and *finis ... initium*). This can be read spatially (beginning, middle, and end of a line), but in the rest of *Against Heresies*, this progression is consistently used to describe time.<sup>18</sup> He uses this language to differentiate creatures from the creator, since humanity is limited by time, but God is without beginning or change. Thus, when Irenaeus' opponents describe their Pleroma with stages of time, Irenaeus suggests that they have constrained God within time and only the containing (or first) god will have a chronological hierarchy. The titles of the Aeons in his opponent's system have this temporal meaning, since his opponents enclose and surround (*circumscribit et circumdat*) the Father with a first-Father, whom they call "before all things" and "before the beginning" (*Proonta et Proarchen* in *haer.* 2.1.2). The God that contains should have chronological priority to whatever is contained, and therefore what is contained cannot be considered atemporal. Both Schoedel and Briggman argue that these stages of time also retain spatial significance in ps-Aristotle's *Melissus*, so this overlap has a precedent in the philosophical tradition.<sup>19</sup> Scholars have noted that *creatio ex nihilo* is central to Irenaeus' theology, and it relies on the concept of time in relation to God. In this doctrine, God's priority depends on God actually being prior, such that, matter has a beginning while God does not.<sup>20</sup> For Irenaeus, while God is not contained by time, nevertheless, God's activity contains and affects the activity of creatures within time.

<sup>17</sup> *haer.* 2.1.2 (SC 294.26–28).

<sup>18</sup> In *haer.* 3.24.1, the text describes the ages of revelation, and in *haer.* 4.11.2, while distinguishing between humanity and God, it describes humanity having a beginning, middle, and increase, but God remaining the same because "he is all light, all mind, all substance, and the fount of all good." See *haer.* 3.24.1 (SC 211.470) and *haer.* 4.11.2 (SC 100.500).

<sup>19</sup> For Norris, this means God is unlimited. Norris, "Who Is the Demiurge?," 17; Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 74–79, and n. 22 and n. 34; Schoedel, "Enclosing, not Enclosed: The early Doctrine of God," 79. For Briggman, although the temporal categories of beginning, middle and end acquire spatial significance in ps-Aristotle, he nonetheless emphasises the temporal significance in his argument for divine infinity.

<sup>20</sup> May, *Creatio ex nihilo*, 168–174.

### 3 Cognitive Meaning of “Containing, Not Contained”

Knowledge and ignorance play a key role in the creation myth of Irenaeus’ opponents, so Irenaeus argues that God’s knowledge must contain everything (know everything), including creation, while God remains incomprehensible (though revealed). For some of Irenaeus’ opponents, creation was a result of divine ignorance, (1) since a rogue Aeon wanted to know the unknown Pleroma (ἀγνώστου; *incognita* in *haer.* 1.19.1), which inadvertently caused creation, (*haer.* 2.2.4), and (2) the Pleroma was ignorant of this creation (*haer.* 2.3.1). This sought to distance God from the stain of creation. For Irenaeus, this only proves that their God is ignorant of something, and therefore does not contain all knowledge:

Indeed, it is unfounded to say that although he contains everything under him, [nevertheless] creation was made by another. For one would need to confess that something empty and unformed below the spiritual Pleroma made everything, and either the Propator, foreknowing the future, abandoned this unformed thing intentionally, or he was ignorant of them. And if, on the one hand, he was ignorant, then he would no longer be the God who foreknows all things, nor would they have a reason for why he left that void empty for such a long time.<sup>21</sup> If, on the other hand, he has foreknowledge and contemplated with his mind the creation which would exist in the future in that place, then he who pre-formed in himself also made it.

Instabile est autem et hoc dicere, infra se omnia continente eo, ab altero quodam fabricatam esse conditionem. Oportet enim illos necessarie uacuum aliquid et informe confiteri, in quo fabricatum est hoc quod est uniuersum, infra spiritale Pleroma; et informe hoc, utrum praesciente Propatore quae in eo futura erant, ex studio sic reliquisse, an ignorante? Et si quidem ignorante, iam non omnium erit praescius Deus. Sed ne quidem causam reddere habebunt, propter quam rem locum hunc temporibus tantis otiosum sic reliquit. Si autem praescius et mente contemplatus est eam conditionem quae in eo loco futura esset, ipse fecit eam qui etiam praeformauit eam in semetipso.<sup>22</sup>

21 This sentence follows Unger’s translation (ACW 65.22).

22 *haer.* 2.3.1 (SC 294.42).

As it relates to cognition, on the positive side of this formula (“containing”), Irenaeus argues that his opponents cannot hold to a God who contains everything, and at the same time argue that creation occurred outside his knowledge. Though not as prominent in this passage, the negative side of this formula (“not contained” cognitively) remains present throughout the opening of Book 2, especially in relation to divine simplicity. Because God is simple, God is beyond human comprehension, whose knowing, willing, and acting cannot be compared to humans.<sup>23</sup> However, for Irenaeus, the negative half of this formula does not preclude knowledge about God, for though God is beyond human comprehension, Irenaeus emphasises that God is revealed, often describing God as known through his love,<sup>24</sup> through scripture (in *haer.* 2.28), through the Son (in *haer.* 2.30.9), and through his Hands, the Son and Spirit (in *haer.* 4.20.4). For Irenaeus, that God is “not contained” by human comprehension does not reject a God that is revealed, so he distinguishes between incomprehensible and unknown.<sup>25</sup> God contains all knowledge, including knowledge of creation, but God is not contained by human knowledge, though God is not unknown.

23 Both Osborn and Briggman link the divine intellect that contains all with divine simplicity. Briggman connects the theme of “containing, not contained” in *haer.* 2.1.2 with the description of God in *haer.* 4.19.2–3, where God is incomprehensible but revealed. Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 82. For further discussion, see Chapter 5, section 2. Osborn connects this description of God’s knowledge directly with the description of divine simplicity in *haer.* 2.13, where God’s knowledge is described as joined with every other description of God’s action (mind, thought, etc.). See Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 38–41. Norris compares this description of God containing all knowledge with Philo and Alcinous, who both show God to be incomprehensible so that, “This infinite and unfathomable God, since he encloses and grounds everything, has nothing prior to him, whether logically or chronologically.” Norris, “Who Is the Demiurge?,” 22.

24 Michael Slusser, “The Heart of Irenaeus’s Theology,” in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy*, ed. S. Parvis and P. Foster (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012).

25 For some of Irenaeus’ opponents, God is beyond thought (προανεννόητος translated *proan-ennoetos* in *haer.* 1.11.3), beyond conception (ἀνεννόητος translated *incognoscibile* in *haer.* 1.15.5, 2.2.4 and *inexcogitabilis* in *haer.* 1.14.1), beyond expression (ἄρηγτός translated *inenarrabilis* in *haer.* 1.11.3; 1.14.1; 1.15.5; 2.2.4; 2.13.4), or beyond name (ἀνονόμαστος translated *innominabilis* in *haer.* 1.11.3; 1.15.5; and ἀκατονόμαστος translated *inenarrabilis* in *haer.* 1.1.1). Irenaeus himself sometimes calls God beyond comprehension or beyond description (ἄρηγτός translated *inenarrabilis* in *haer.* 4.6.3 and ἀνεξήγητος translated as *inenarrabilis* in *haer.* 4.20.5), but he also regularly insists that God is revealed.

#### 4 Providential Meaning of “Containing, Not Contained”

Beyond the spatial, temporal, and cognitive meanings of the metaphor of containment, there is a providential meaning that has not been explored: that God’s will and purpose contain all things, including the plan for creation. In the opening of Book 2, Irenaeus argues that the will of God cannot be separated from the activity of creation, for what God wills occurs just as it is willed, and without separation of power, time, or knowledge.<sup>26</sup> The role of divine power has already been introduced, but here Irenaeus clarifies that power cannot be separated from the divine will, for God himself planned creation. In *haer.* 2.1.2, containment is applied to God’s power, for “whichever is the greater and stronger and better Lord (*maius ... et firmitus et magis*), this one will be God,” and the greater, stronger and better will contain the lesser.<sup>27</sup>

This creates a problem for Irenaeus’ opponents, which he highlights by drawing from themes similar to the description of containment found in the *Timaeus*. First, if they claim that a wandering Aeon/power went outside the Pleroma to create, this would mean that the Pleroma does not contain all, and both the Pleroma and the Aeon would be surrounded (*continebuntur*) and enclosed (*circumfinientur*) by a third thing or boundary. Second, this leads to an infinite regress on who is containing what, implying innumerable worlds, innumerable gods, and polytheism (*haer.* 2.1.4).<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, his opponents add a vast dis-

26 Meijering examines God’s will on two occasions, and in both he briefly alludes to the opening of Book 2 of *Against Heresies*. See R. Meijering, “Irenaeus’ Relation to Philosophy in the Light of His Concept of Free Will,” in *Romanitas et Christianitas*, ed. W. den Boer (Amsterdam: 1973); R. Meijering, “Some Observations on Irenaeus’ Polemic Against the Gnostics,” in *God being History: Studies in Patristic Philosophy*, ed. R. Meijering (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1975).

27 *haer.* 2.1.2 (SC 294.28).

28 In the *Timaeus*, Plato (1) wants to avoid an infinite number of worlds and (2) uses containment to demonstrate that separating the creator from certain parts of creation results in a third “container” which encircles everything. Though not speaking of the demiurge, Plato uses the idea of “containing” or “enclosing” through three different Greek verbs to describe the cause of creation. He states that this “Living Thing” (ζῶον) is best and most complete in every way because it has (περιλαμβάνω) within itself every living creature, just as the universe has (συνίστημι) within itself all visible living creatures that have been made (*Tim.* 30D). He goes on to state that there can only be one “Living Thing” that has (περιέχω) all living creatures because if there were two, some other “Living Thing” would need to contain (περιέχω) those two, and then the universe would not be modelled after those two “Living Things,” but a third (*Tim.* 31A–B). Plato argues for a single universe that contains all living things and a single “Living Thing” which contains the best and most complete nature of each, in order to affirm a single universe (and precludes an infinite

tance (*immensa separatione distantes*) between God and the creator because they want a separation of purpose (*sententia*), a term that is found in Latin readers of Plato in discussions of fate and providence.<sup>29</sup> Irenaeus' argument seems to draw from Platonic language to challenge any attempt to separate God's will from the activity of creation. Irenaeus then pauses his negative polemic and provides a constructive theological assertion that differentiates his God from the polytheistic system of his opponents, with a series of envious and necessarily inferior gods (cf. *Tim.* 29E):

It is necessary either for there to be one [God] who contains all and is himself the one and only [who] made each and every thing that was made in whatever way he himself wished, or many different and undetermined makers and gods, starting one after another and stopping one after another through every part.

Oportet enim aut unum esse qui omnia continet et in suis fecit unumquodque eorum quae facta sunt quemadmodum ipse uoluit, aut multos rursus et indeterminatos Factores et Deos, ab inuicem quidem incipientes, ad inuicem autem desinentes per omnem partem.<sup>30</sup>

For Irenaeus, the providential will of God must contain creation, and creation must occur just as was willed, otherwise, this would not be the containing God. As seen below, he uses Middle Platonist arguments against Stoic conceptions of fate to argue that the will and providence of God must have caused creation. Furthermore, the language from the definition of simplicity is used to argue that God's will is inseparable from and simultaneous to the activity of creating.

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number of universes). Norris quotes *haer.* 2.1.2 alongside *haer.* 2.1.5, and argues that this view of the power of God should be paralleled with Philo's spatial argument that God is at once "everywhere and nowhere". Philo, *Conf.* 136; Norris, "Who Is the Demiurge?," 17–19.

29 Apuleius uses the Latin *sententia* in the same kind of discussion on providence, and he uses it to replace ps-Plutarch's divine *nomos* to describe primary providence. Apuleius of Madaura (c. 150 CE), in *On Plato and His Doctrine* 1.12 differentiates between Fate and Providence in much the same way as ps-Plutarch's *On Fate*. Dillon has shown that while one could associate the divine *logos* and *nomos* from ps-Plutarch with the divine *sententia* and *lex* from Apuleius, he gives a different definition to both, since he argues that what is done by Providence should be understood as having been done by Fate. John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 321. See also Fowler, *Imperial Plato: Albinus, Maximus, Apuleius*, 172–173, n. 30. It seems appropriate to translate *sententiam* as "purpose" or "will" in the context of a discussion on providence.

30 *haer.* 2.1.5 (SC 294.32).

#### 4.1 *God's Will, Thought, and Act Together*

This passage and its view of the divine will overlap with his definition of divine simplicity (*haer.* 2.13), where descriptions of God's activity must be understood without the kinds of separation found in humans. Prior to this definition, after arguing that God foreknows (*praesciente* and *praescius*) all things, he uses the language of divine simplicity to affirm simultaneity and unity between God's thought and God's action.

Therefore, may they stop saying that the world was made by another, for as soon as God's mind conceived something in his mind, what he conceived was made. It was impossible for someone to conceive in his/her mind, and for another to actually make what had been conceived by the former in his/her mind. According to these heretics, God's mind conceived either the eternal or temporal world, but either is unbelievable. For if indeed his mind conceived what is eternal, spiritual and invisible, it would have been made in that way. If, however, it was made such as it is, it was made just as his mind conceived it, or he wanted it to be such according to his mind's conception in the presence of the Father: composite, changeable, and moveable. Therefore, since [creation] is just as the Father himself had planned it, it is a creation worthy of the Father.

Quiescant igitur dicere ab alio factum esse mundum: simul enim ac mente concepit Deus, et factum est hoc quod mente conceperat. Nec enim possibile erat alium quidem mente concipere, alium uero facere quae ab illo mente concepta fuerant. Sed aut aeternum mundum mente concepit secundum eos haereticos Deus, aut temporalem: quae utraque incredibilia. Sed si quidem aeternum eum mente concepit et spiritalem et inuisibilem, talis et factus fuisset. Si autem talis qualis est, et ipse fecit eum talem, qui talem quidem mente conceperat; aut in praesentia Patris uoluit esse eum secundum mentis conceptionem talem, et compositum et mutabilem et transeuntem. Cum autem sit talis, qualem Pater deformauerat apud semetipsum, dignam esse Patris fabricationem.<sup>31</sup>

First, Irenaeus denies any temporal separation in divine activity. While his opponents use chronological separation for the unfolding of divine action, Irenaeus opposes temporal separation between God's thought, will, or action. Secondly, he opposes the claim that only a composite God could make a com-

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<sup>31</sup> *haer.* 2.3.2 (SC 294.42–44).



posite world. Irenaeus argues that, by describing the act of creation with parts, they are actually describing God as composite. In place of this inappropriate argument, he argues that creation occurred just as God planned, and not as a result of ignorance.<sup>32</sup> Rather than creation having the exact nature of its creator, it has a composite, changeable, and transient nature because it is created, and thus it has the potential to mature and increase.<sup>33</sup> What is created cannot have an uncreated nature. Irenaeus ends the section by repeating, “For whatever [God’s] mind had conceived (*mente conceperat*), this was made,” driving home his point that God’s thought, will, and act cannot be separated: they entail each other.

This simultaneity between God’s will, thought and activity is further linked to divine simplicity earlier in *Against Heresies*. In Book 1, Irenaeus states:

He is the God of the universe: who, as soon as he thought he completed what he thought, and as soon as he willed he completed what he willed; and as soon as he wills, he thinks that which he has willed; thus thinking when he wills, and willing when he thinks, since he is all thought, [all will, all mind, all light,] all eye, all ear, and the entire source of all good.

ἢ περὶ τοῦ τῶν ὅλων δεσπότη· ὃς ἅμα τῷ ἐννοηθῆναι καὶ ἐπιτετέλεκε τοῦθ' ὅπερ ἐνενοήθη, καὶ ἅμα τῷ θελήσει καὶ ἐννοεῖται τοῦθ' ὅπερ [καὶ] ἠθέλησεν, τότε ἐννοούμενος ὅτε θέλει, καὶ τότε θέλων, ὅτε ἐννοεῖται, ὅλος ἐννοία ὢν, ὅλος θέλημα [ὢν], ὅλος νοῦς, [ὅλος φῶς Epiphani.] ὅλος ὀφθαλμός, ὅλος ἀκοή, ὅλος πηγὴ πάντων τῶν ἀγαθῶν.

eius qui est uniuersorum Dominus: qui simul ut cogitauit perfecit id quod cogitauit, et simul ac uoluit et cogitat hoc quod uoluit, tunc cogitans cum uult et tunc uolens cum cogitat, cum sit totus cogitatus et totus sensus et totus oculus et totus auditus et totus fons omnium bonorum.<sup>34</sup>

This cites the same line of Xenophanes that is used in the definition of the simple God in *haer.* 2.13.3, which ends by saying that God is, “totally similar and equal to himself, since he is all Mind, all Spirit, all Understanding, all Thought, all Reason, all Hearing, all Sight, all Light and the entire source of all that is

32 As Irenaeus will argue in *haer.* 4.11.2, creation is transient because it has a beginning, middle, and increase, but God remains the same because “he is all light, all mind, all substance, and the fount of all good.”

33 See *haer.* 4.38.3.

34 *haer.* 1.12.2 (SC 264.182–184).

good.”<sup>35</sup> Although the term “will” is not in *haer.* 2.13 as it is in *haer.* 1.12, the unity of powers makes the same point. One cannot describe God’s will as separate from God’s activity, because God is simple.

When Irenaeus claims that God conceives just what he thinks (in *haer.* 2.3) for creation, I suggest that this also implies God’s revealing of himself. Throughout *Against Heresies*, creation and revelation are described as a united activity, and they occur just as was always planned and willed by God. In *haer.* 2.10.2–4, Irenaeus describes creation in terms of the will and power of God. In *haer.* 2.30.9, the will of God is described as “the substance of all things” and as the source of creation, and the Word which creates also reveals the Father.<sup>36</sup> In Book 4, while differentiating creatures from the creator, he argues that the Son and Spirit reveal the Father “to all to whom he wills, and when he wills, and as the Father wills” since the beginning of creation, which is the same language used later in Book 4 of the “containing, not contained” God being seen by whom, when, and as he wills.<sup>37</sup> There is a tension, for though creation does not result in predestined natures that determine redemption (as his opponents argue), because of divine simplicity, the will of God contains all thing and is revealed in God’s economy.<sup>38</sup>

#### 4.2 *Creation Caused by Angels and Powers or by the Will of God*

This focus on the will and knowledge of God specifically opposes creation through instruments or servants, because this would suggest parts. In *haer.* 2.2.1–3, Irenaeus counters Basilides’s system of Angel-creators to show that the

35 *haer.* 2.13.3 (SC 294.114–116) totus ipse sibimetipsi similis et aequalis est, totus cum sit sensus et totus spiritus et totus sensuabilitas et totus ennoia et totus ratio et totus auditus et totus oculus et totus lumen et totus fons omnium bonorum. Later in *haer.* 2.13.8, he states, “Yet in the way the person who says of him, ‘all sight and all hearing—so that, in the way he sees he also hears, and in the way he hears he also sees,’ does not sin, so too this person is affirming both all Thought and all Word so that in the way he is Thought, in this same way he is also Word, and the Word is his *Nous*.”

36 *haer.* 2.30.9 (SC 294.318) “he by himself freely made, ordered, and completed/perfected/finished everything, and his will is the substance of all things ...” ipse a semetipso fecit libere et ex sua potestate et disposuit et perfecit omnia et est substantia omnium voluntas eius.

37 *haer.* 4.6.7 (SC 100.454) quibus vult et quando vult et quemadmodum vult Pater; *haer.* 4.20.5 (SC 100.638) quibus ... quando ... quemadmodum vult.

38 This tension between divine and human free will is present throughout *Against Heresies*, for though humans have free will (*haer.* 4.37.4 and 4.39.3–4), nonetheless, all created things yield to the will of God (*haer.* 5.5.2). For a comparison of the divine will and human will, see Meijering, “Irenaeus’ Relation to Philosophy in the Light of His Concept of Free Will.”; Fantino, *La théologie d’Irénée*, 198–202.

creation was not made apart from the will (*voluntatem*) and purpose (*sententiam*) of God, since these angels-creators would either be contained (*continentur*) by God or be in a place outside of him (*in alienis et extra eum; extra eum*). Either way, the first cause would need to plan a creation that would occur the future, or his will could not contain everything:

Those who say that the world was made by Angels, or rather by another world-Maker aside from the purpose of him who is Father over all, first of all, are sinning by saying that angels made so great and large a creation apart from the will of the first God, as if the angels were more efficient than God, or as if [God] was neglectful or of an inferior existence or did not care whether the things he himself made were well or poorly made, such that he would cast out and forbid one but praise and take joy in the other. If this is not even applied to a skilled human, how much less to God?

Qui autem ab Angelis mundum dicunt fabricatum uel ab alio quodam mundi Fabricatore praeter sententiam eius qui super omnia Pater est, primo quidem ex hoc ipso peccant, praeter uoluntatem primi Dei talem et tantam conditionem Angelos fecisse dicentes, quasi efficaciores sint Angeli quam Deus, aut rursus quasi ille negligens sit aut minor exsistens aut nullam curam habens eorum quae in propriis ipsius fiant, utrumnam male an bene fiant, ut illud quidem dissipet et prohibeat, alterum autem laudet et gaudeat: hoc autem ne homini quidem sollerti applicet quis, quanto magis Deo?<sup>39</sup>

As with the spatial, temporal, and cognitive meanings of this metaphor, it is vital for Irenaeus to show that creation was not unplanned by God, and thus, carried out by rogue powers or angels. Irenaeus repeats that “it would be useless to say that the world was made apart from his purpose (*sententiam eius*), in his realm (*in eius propriis*),” particularly because, even if this is the case, the God who knows all (containment with a cognitive meaning) would be able to see into the future.<sup>40</sup> God must, therefore, be understood as the first cause (*prolator et primus causa*). Whether one talks about the desiring and knowing (*volunte et sciente*) that brought about creation, or the will (*voluntatem*) of God

39 *haer.* 2.2.1 (SC 294.34).

40 *haer.* 2.2.2 (SC 294.36) ualde uanum erit praeter sententiam eius in eius propriis ab Angelis et ipsis qui sunt in potestate eius aut ab alio quodam dicere fabricatum esse mundum, aut quasi non omnia perspiciat ipse quae sint in suis, aut non sciat quae ab Angelis futura sint.

for creation, or of angels as a cause of creation (*causa creationis*), either way, one would have to admit that the first cause prepared the other causes of creation (*causas fabricationis*), and therefore creation was done within the will of the first cause. This point is illustrated by his metaphor of the king, architect, and craftsman:

It is like a king, who is brought for the guidance of war, who prepared those things that are the [actual] cause of victory, or in the construction of a city or a public works, the person who planned the causes to their completion [i.e. materials for building], of things made under him. Therefore, we would not say that the axe split the wood or the saw cut it, but one would most appropriately say that the person, who in fact made the axe and the saw, is the one who cut and split it, and even more so, the one who made the original tools by which axe and saw were made.

quemadmodum in regem correctio belli refertur, qui praeparauit ea quae sunt causa uictoriae, et conditio huius ciuitatis aut huius operis in eum qui praeparauit causas ad perfectionem eorum quae deorsum facta sunt. Quapropter non iam securim dicimus concidere ligna uel serram secare, sed hominem concidere et secare rectissime quis dicat eum qui ipsam securim et serram ad hoc fecit, et multo prius armamenta omnia per quae fabricata sunt securis et serra.<sup>41</sup>

The preparation and planning that come before each outcome (in battle, construction, and millwork) distinguishes the first, and actual, cause.<sup>42</sup> The will and purpose of God are the first cause of creation. However, while the imagery of an axe or saw illustrate the priority of the first cause, he must explain his own view on the role of tools or instruments.

<sup>41</sup> *haer.* 2.2.3 (SC 294.36).

<sup>42</sup> For a similar argument concerning God's power in the midrash, see the discussion in Schremer's response to Segal's book on the "Two powers in heaven heresy." Adiel Schremer, "Midrash, Theology, and History: Two Powers in Heaven Revisited," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 39 (2008): 251. He cites the *Shirta*, where God's power does not change and is not diminished. "There may be a hero in a country who is fully equipped with all the implements of warfare, but possesses neither strength nor courage, nor the knowledge of the tactics and the order of warfare. He by whose word the world came into being, however, is not so, but He has strength, courage and knowledge of the tactics and the order of warfare, as it is said: 'For the battle is the Lord's and He will give you into our hand' (1Sam 17:47)."

He then refers to the scriptural passages central to his theology of creation, starting with Hermas, *Mandate* 1.1 and Genesis 1, to argue that God did not need angels or other powers to complete the creation He willed.

Rather, predetermining himself in himself all things, he made everything just as he wanted, in a way that is indescribable and incomprehensible to us.

sed ipse in semetipso secundum id quod est inenarrabile et inexcogitabile nobis omnia praedestinans fecit quemadmodum uoluit.<sup>43</sup>

Irenaeus rejects the view that God created through angels or instruments (*organis*). Instead, God's Word was ideal and sufficient (*idoneus et sufficiens*),<sup>44</sup> a claim supported by citing the key scriptural passages that undergird his theology of creation (Gen 1, John 1:3; Ps 32[33], and Eph 4:6), citations which are made up of different kinds of scripture (he names the books John and Genesis and the persons David and Paul).<sup>45</sup> In his account, these scriptural passages present a unified account, and support his later claim that there is not a division between Father, Son, and Spirit in the work of God's Hands in creation (see Chapter 5). For Irenaeus, these different scriptures provide a unified testimony of creation, substantiating his assertion that the Word is not an instrument of God, but rather the Word fulfilled the will of God as determined "himself in himself" and the Word "himself, through himself" created.<sup>46</sup> In an argument that has, until now, been largely deconstructive, Irenaeus describes his own view of the activity of creation, with God's will, power, and knowledge containing the activity of creation, and creation occurs through his Word, not as an instrument, but God himself in himself.

Lastly, Irenaeus uses the metaphor of containment to reject language of fate and necessity in favour of providence, and he does it in a way that echoes a contemporary middle Platonic debate. In *haer.* 2.5.3, Irenaeus claims that his opponents are at a crossroads. Either God permits and allows (*concedit et probat*) creation to occur in the womb of the Pleroma, or they must say that creation occurred without the permission and approval of the Father (*non*

43 *haer.* 2.2.4 (SC 294.38).

44 I here disagree with Rousseau's emendation and Unger's adoption of it, that this is a doubling of the Greek ἑαυτοῦς. See Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 293, 212; Unger and Dillon, ACW 65, 119.

45 For discussion on this exegesis, see Chapter 1, section 3.

46 *haer.* 4.20.1.

*concedente neque aprobante patre*), and therefore something stronger caused creation.<sup>47</sup> With this latter option, either (1) the demiurge is more powerful than the Father, or (2) the Father allowed creation out of necessity (*necessitatem*).<sup>48</sup> There is a Stoic background to the language of fate and necessity, and elsewhere Irenaeus has explicitly linked the doctrine of his opponents with the Stoic doctrine of Fate (*haer.* 2.14.4).<sup>49</sup> Within a century of Irenaeus, *On Fate*, which is attributed to ps-Plutarch, examined the intersection of providence and necessity.<sup>50</sup> The author differentiates between primary, secondary, and tertiary providence to ensure that, although primary providence contains

47 *haer.* 2.5.3 (SC 294.56). Unger translates this “bosom”, which echoes the flow of the passage (ACW 65.26). Just prior, in *haer.* 2.4.2 and 2.4.3, Irenaeus twice refers to the *sinus* of the Pleroma, and then of the Father. This helps to link the argument to John 1:18. However, in an effort to reflect the extant Latin term (*ventre*), I retained “womb.”

48 *haer.* 2.5.3 (SC 294.56).

49 Plato's *Timaeus* was often the starting point for debates on the role of providence in creation in Middle Platonism. Both intellect and necessity are described as causal influences to creation (for example, see *Tim.* 74E–75D), and Homeric literature provided the illustrations for this debate, since the gods are constantly under the constraints of fate. Stoicism also played prominently in this debate as seen in Cicero's *de fato*, where he places Chrysippus and Epicurus in conversation, favouring the former because (1) he rejects necessity and (2) he places everything under fore-ordained causes (differentiating perfect and principle causes from auxiliary and proximate causes: *perfectis et principalibus, sed causis adiuvantibus et proximis*), in *de fato* 18.41 (LCL 349.237–238). In the context of this discussion, Epicureans wanted to preserve human free will, but Cicero shows that this cannot be done at the expense of fate or necessity because of the rules of logic. In *de fato* 44, Cicero talks about the containing causes (*continens causas*) in the context of assent, so that even assent is a cause contained by fate. Rackham translates it as “contiguous cause,” but this carries the sense of something alongside, and not contained. H. Rackham, ed., *Cicero: De Oratore Book 111, De Fato, Paradoxa Stoicorum, De partitione oratoria*, LCL 349 (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1942), 241. In this middle-Platonic, Stoic, and Epicurean debate, metaphysics (causes, fate, and necessity) informs ethics (free will). Even when distinguishing causes, fate is still placed prominently in the order of the universe. In fact, as argued by Bobzien, in the Stoic view on the cosmos, Fate, God, Providence, Reason (*logos*), God's Will, and the Active Principle were generally the same. For others, such as Cleanthes (as seen in Calcidius's *Commentary on the Timaeus* 144), fate and providence were differentiated in an effort to avoid attributing evil to god (Cleanthes *Hymn to Zeus* 122.11–13). See Susanne Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 46–47.

50 This text was not written by Plutarch, but is probably by a 2nd century Platonist. However, while Plutarch is rejected as the author because it lacks the “intellectual excitement characteristic of Plutarch's writing” (see Sharples), it does not contradict the content in Plutarch's other writings. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, 320–325; Robert W. Sharples, “The Stoic Background to the Middle Platonist Discussion of Fate,” in *Platonic Stoicism, Stoic Platonism: The Dialogue between Platonism and Stoicism in Antiquity*, ed. M. Bonazzi and C. Helmig (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 169.

all, it was not made responsible for evil.<sup>51</sup> However, the author also insists that providence must not be contained and controlled by fate. Irenaeus uses elements of this philosophical debate to argue that God's providence could not be contained by fate and necessity.<sup>52</sup>

It is not proper to say that the God who is over all serves necessity since he is free and has his own powers, and his concession would be according to his purpose. Otherwise, they would make necessity greater and more powerful than God, since what is more powerful is also older than everything else. Right from the beginning, he would need to remove the cause of necessity and not bind himself to having necessity, removing anything outside of what is proper to him. It would be better, more consistent, and more godlike if, from the start of the beginning, he had removed this kind of necessity, than if afterward, as if sorry for what he had done, he tried to remove so large a fruit of necessity. And if the Father of the uni-

51 According to Boys-Stones, Middle Platonists began to argue that providence should be understood as superior and prior to fate, and categorised this discussion as one of metaphysics. G.R. Boys-Stones, "Middle' Platonists on Fate and Human Autonomy," in *Greek and Roman philosophy 100 BC–200 AD*, ed. R. Sharples and R. Sorabji (London: Institute of Classical Studies, University of London, 2007), 431, 46. The author first compares fate to a circle containing everything (*de fato* 569A). This text marks a change from Cicero because while fate includes (περιέχει) every contingent possible choice of a human, fate is in turn contained (περιεῖληφε from περιλαμβάνω) by providence (*de fato* 572F). While fate conforms (ἐνδέχονται) to providence, providence does not conform to fate, so fate is understood to be younger (νεώτερον) or logically posterior to providence, which is, "eldest (πρεσβύτατον) of all, save the one whose will or intellection or both it is, and it is that, as has been previously stated, of the Father and Artisan of all things" (*de fato* 572B). In his argument, primary providence framed the souls of men and the cosmos (supported by *Tim.* 29D–30A and 41D–E). Secondary providence gave the task of completing creation to the gods (citing *Tim.* 42D–E). Tertiary providence is understood as the laws given to humanity, thereby distancing providence from the author of evil (referring to *Tim.* 42D–E, and citing *Phaed.* 247A and *Laws* 875C–D). Other Middle Platonist examples exist. For example, Apuleius, *On Plato and His Doctrine* 1.12, says that evil cannot be ascribed to God because of providence. "All things that are conducted naturally—and for that reason, rightly—are governed by the guardianship of providence; we cannot ascribe the cause of any evil to God. For this reason, Plato believes that one cannot blame everything on the lot of fate." See Fowler, *Imperial Plato: Albinus, Maximus, Apuleius*, 172.

52 Meijering's study provides helpful descriptions for the ways Irenaeus' argument echoes the language of Plato and Middle Platonic opposition to Epicureanism. See Meijering, "Some Observations on Irenaeus' Polemic Against the Gnostics." Irenaeus' text has been compared to other ps-Plutarch texts. Schoedel claims *placita* and *Against Heresies* made use of the same doxography. See Schoedel, "Philosophy and Rhetoric in the *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus."

verse was a servant to necessity, he would fall under fate by tolerating all the troublesome things that occur without being able to do anything against necessity and fate, just like the Homeric Jupiter who of necessity says, “for I gave to you as if willing, but with an unwilling soul” (*Iliad* 4.43). Therefore, according to this reasoning, their Bythus would be found to be a slave of necessity and fate.

Non decet autem eum qui super omnia sit Deus, cum sit liber et suae potestatis, necessitati seruisse dicere, ut sit aliquid secundum concessionem praeter sententiam eius: alioquin necessitatem maiorem et dominantiore facient quam Deum, quando id quod magis potest antiquius sit omnibus. Et statim in principio causas abscidere necessitatis debuit et non concludere semetipsum ad habendam necessitatem, concedendo aliquid praeterquam deceat eum. Multo enim melius et consequentius et magis deificum erat ut in principio initium excideret huiusmodi necessitatis, quam postea quasi de paenitentia conaretur tantam fructificationem necessitatis eradicare. Et si necessitati seruiens erit Pater uniuersorum, et sub fatum cadet moleste ferens in his quae fiunt, praeter necessitatem autem et fatum nihil agere possit, similiter atque homericus Iupiter, qui per necessitatem dicit: *Et ego enim tibi dedi uelut uolens, nolente animo*. Secundum igitur hanc rationem necessitatis et fati inuenietur seruus Bythus ipsorum.<sup>53</sup>

Since God is free, he is not a slave of necessity, and therefore, he would not need or allow something else to do the work of creating, especially something against or outside his purpose (*praeter sententiam eius*).<sup>54</sup> Just as ps-Plutarch (in *de fato* 572F) makes an argument for providence being above necessity because it is logically prior and older, here Irenaeus states that, in the argument of his opponents, necessity would be more powerful and older than God. Irenaeus argues that if the Father of all is a slave of necessity, then he is also under fate, and if necessity and fate (*necessitatem ... et fatum*) constrain him, he would be just like the Homeric Jupiter.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the Pleroma of Irenaeus' opponents would

53 *haer.* 2.5.4 (SC 294.58–60).

54 *Sententiam* is used to describe the purpose of God's creation starting in *haer.* 2. In *haer.* 2.1.1, God made all things by his own purpose and free will (*sua sententia et libere fecit omnia*). In *haer.* 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, against Basilides, creation would not occur outside of his purpose (*praeter sententiam eius*). (SC 294.26, 34, 36).

55 In the *Iliad* 4.43, Zeus allows the sacking of Troy as if willing (*volens*), although unwilling (*nolente*).



likewise be, “a slave of fate and necessity” (*necessitates et fati ... servuus*) since it allows creation against its own will.<sup>56</sup> Irenaeus goes on to argue that God’s providence, though unseen, is still known: illustrated by an emperor who is known by those living under the Roman empire though they never see him.<sup>57</sup> For ps-Plutarch, primary providence in creation must not be a fake providence that is actually constrained by a deterministic fate or necessity, and this providence or purpose is the initial means whereby God is known. Because Irenaeus is arguing for a God who is providentially “containing, not contained”, he eliminates any external influences upon God, whether personal Aeons or impersonal fate, and the Latin translation of Irenaeus preserves the technical philosophical terms used. God’s “containing, not contained” will, itself, provides a united picture of God’s activity so that God’s primary providence foreknew the results of creation.<sup>58</sup> God’s will and activity cannot be separated. There are no interme-

56 *haer.* 2.5.4 (SC 294.58–60).

57 *haer.* 2.6.1–2. Irenaeus differentiates natural and special knowledge, stating that “one God, Lord of all” is the single fact that is known by all (natural knowledge), but the Father is revealed by the Son (special knowledge). He supports this latter statement with Matthew 11:27 (“no one knows the Father except the Son, and whoever the Son has willed to reveal him to”). See Unger’s very helpful discussion on this differentiation throughout *Against Heresies*. Unger and Dillon, *ACW* 65, 122–124, n. 5. See also Luckhart, “Matthew 11,27 in the ‘Contra Haereses’ of St. Irenaeus.”

58 A tertiary providence is not as clear in Irenaeus, but could be seen in *haer.* 3.25 and 4.38.1. First, after claiming that the god of Epicurus has no providence, and claiming Plato is more religious than Marcion (and Valentinians), Irenaeus differentiates between God’s providence and counsel (*providentiam* and *consilium*). While God exercises providence over all things, counsel applies to moral discipline (*qui morum providentiam habent*: literally, “those having providence/foresight of habits”) in *haer.* 3.25.1 (SC 211.478). Irenaeus claims that gentiles (such as Plato) were able to recognise the Creator as the Father of the All and see that his providence arranged the world, with an overarching providence alongside a counsel providing regulative norms for humanity (hence his citations from *Laws* and *Timaeus*). The argument in *haer.* 4.38.1 is similar. When discussing the origin of corruption (*haer.* 2.5.3), Irenaeus argues that under his opponents’ system, God was either unable or unwilling to disallow creation, and these are the same two explanations later given for human sin and imperfection (see *haer.* 4.38.1). In Book 4, while a mother is able (δύναται) to give the infant more solid food, the infant is not able (ἀδυνατεί) to retain it. Likewise, at the beginning, humanity was unable to receive, being an infant (οὕτως καὶ ὁ Θεὸς αὐτὸς μὲν οἶός τε ἦν παρασχεῖν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τὸ τέλειον). This is due to the creator/creature differentiation, one being perfect and the other always moving toward perfection. However, at the start, humans were unaccustomed and untrained in perfect discipline (ἀγύμναστα πρὸς τὴν τελείαν ἀγωγὴν), which implies that humanity was not yet willing. (SC 100.944–946). Irenaeus’ ethical arguments in Books 3–4 rest on his cosmological argument from Book 2, so that God’s will “containing” creation provides counsel for human action. God’s providence in creation is intricately involved with humanity.

diaries that complete the activity of a creation planned beforehand. Instead, because God is simple, God's will entails God's activity, and any description of God's powers start from God himself creating.

## 5 Conclusion

The language for a "containing, not contained" God in creation is used in different ways, as shown in the four sections of this chapter, but they each support the argument that God is the cause of creation. In the providential meaning of this metaphor, explored in the final section, the activity of creation is not separated from the will of God nor constrained by fate or necessity. Irenaeus uses language from Middle Platonic debates to criticise his opponent's language of fate as a cause for a creation above the creator, and to argue that God's providence governs creation. Instead, divine will is fulfilled in divine activity. Irenaeus even specifies that God's powers, namely his Word, cannot be described as instruments, for God himself, through himself, created. The principle of divine simplicity helps guide what is said about God as creator, because the will of God cannot be separated from God's power and activity, and instead, God's will is united and simultaneous with the activity that fulfills it. However, there is reference to a distinct actor, for it is the Word that fulfills the will of the Father. God's will cannot be separated from God's thought, and God's thought cannot be separated from God's activity, because God is simple, but there remains some distinction within God.

## Divine Generation and a Simple God

In each chapter of Part 2, I am arguing that divine simplicity has implications for different areas of Irenaeus' theology. While scholars have not examined the other theological implications in detail, some have noted that Irenaeus' view of divine generation depends on divine simplicity. This chapter therefore explores these arguments and makes the novel claim that God's names and powers are mutually entailing, which means they remain *distinct* in unity. Anthony Briggman and Pui Ip have both concluded that, in line with a concept of divine simplicity, God's powers are *identical*, and Ip's argument on *haer.* 2.17 provides the strongest evidence for this view.<sup>1</sup> Ip cautions against reading Irenaeus as proto-Trinitarian, arguing that Irenaeus lacks a clear distinction between the generator and generated that would differentiate his view from a kind of proto-Monarchianism. As he traces the Christian appropriation of divine simplicity, he starts with Irenaeus and Monarchians, and claims that Origen, who is conscious of both Valentinian and Monarchian positions, is the first to clearly distinguish between the generator and the generated without separating them.

By looking through a second-century lens, I argue that a reading of Irenaeus' divine simplicity, as unity in distinction, should be preferred. While Irenaeus does not use third-century terms of distinction, this may not be the proper gauge for measuring his view. In section one I argue that the question regarding the relationship between generator-generated had already been outlined in the second-century. Prior to Irenaeus, these two opposite views of generation (God generating powers separately and God generating powers without distinction) were explored by Tatian and Ptolemy in the context of divine simplicity. Irenaeus clearly rejects the kind of separation proposed by Ptolemy, but he does not go on to reject distinction in God, as Tatian does. In section two I

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1 Briggman and Ip focus on *haer.* 2.17 and divine generation in chapter 3 of their respective books. Briggman first describes God's powers as identical in chapter 2, and while he retains that language in Chapter 3, he argues that the Father and Word are distinct. Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*; Ip, *Origen of Alexandria and the Emergence of Divine Simplicity before Nicaea*. Briggman provides an exhaustive answer to those who claim that Irenaeus says nothing on divine generation, based on *haer.* 2.28.5. See Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 121–122. I am grateful to Dr. Pui Ip for allowing me to examine elements from his book prior to submitting my dissertation, and for his kind and collegial exchanges with me on this topic of divine generation.

re-examine the three metaphors in which Briggman and Ip have found the four principles for divine generation in Irenaeus' system. They argue that the fourth principle, that divine generation is simple and uniform and altogether equal and similar to itself, sums up the other three. I agree, but highlight that this principle consistently retains a sense of distinction. Lastly, I focus on the ways this fourth principle is applied to God's Mind, Word and Wisdom, and I argue that distinction is retained between these divine powers. Because in *haer.* 2.17, Irenaeus does not reject distinction, like Tatian, but instead argues for absolute unity alongside language that retains distinction, and because Irenaeus' arguments elsewhere depend on distinction of God's powers, I conclude that this passage should be read as exploring the tension of unity with distinction in divine generation.

## 1 Second-Century Descriptions of the Simple God and Divine Generation

Before Irenaeus, divine simplicity was used in two opposing views of divine generation. Ptolemy, who was a student of Valentinus in Rome, authored the *Letter to Flora*, which differentiates between the substance of the generated demiurge and the simple Father.<sup>2</sup> Tatian, who was a student of Justin, completed his *Oration Against the Greeks* prior to leaving Rome (c. 177 CE).<sup>3</sup> Though Irenaeus accused him of adherence to various variant positions, including Mar-

2 In 2 *Apology* (ca. 152 CE), Justin describes a martyr, Ptolemy, who is "a lover of truth" and showed himself to be a "true Christian." Justin also condemns Valentinian schools in the later text, *Dialogue with Trypho* (ca. 155–166 CE), so if they refer to the same person, it is unlikely that Justin knew that Ptolemy was a student of Valentinus in Rome. See Justin, 2 *apol.* 2.11–14. φιλαλήθῃ ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀπατηλὸν οὐδὲ ψευδολόγον τὴν γνώμην ὄντα ... τῷ ἀληθινῷ Χριστιανῷ. Translation and Greek from D. Minns and P. Parvis, eds., *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies* (Oxford: OUP, 2014), 276–277. In the later text, *Dialogue with Trypho* 35 (ca. 155–166 CE), he calls Valentinians "sheep in wolves' clothing," "false prophets," and "those calling themselves Christians." Marksches argues that, "Ptolemy was closer to the consent of the theology of the city of Rome than his followers," because he was not condemned by Justin. Christopher Marksches, "New Research on Ptolemaeus Gnosticus," *ZAC* 4 (2000): 252. Scholars have noted that there are significant differences between Valentinus, Ptolemy, and their respective followers. See Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*; Christopher Marksches, "Individuality in Some Gnostic Authors: With a few remarks on the interpretation of Ptolemaeus, *Epistula ad Floram*," *ZAC* 15 (2011).

3 R.M. Grant, "The Date of Tatian's Oration," *HTR* 46, no. 2 (1953); William Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: its creation, dissemination, significance, and history in scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 71.

cionite, Valentinian, and Encratite,<sup>4</sup> when it comes to his description of the Word's simple generation, his position echoes later descriptions of Monarchianism by eliminating any difference or distinction between the Father and his Word, a view that directly contrasts the Valentinian view of separated emanations.<sup>5</sup> Irenaeus' argument on divine generation in *haer.* 2.17 engages the language and metaphors of these two opposing views. Because he spent time in Rome around the same time (before 175 CE), and because he directly opposes both Ptolemy and Tatian by name in *Against Heresies*, it seems likely that he was aware of some version of these two views of divine generation in the context of divine simplicity. However, in his complete opposition to Valentinian positions, he does not adopt Tatian's view.

Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* describes divine generation in the context of the simple God by separating the generating Father from the generated demiurge. He mostly focuses on the law in scripture, but eventually, he imposes his tripartite view of the law onto his metaphysics. He argues that the tripartite contributors of the law are God, Moses, and the elders (superior, intermediary, and inferior), but the Law of God established by the Saviour abolished the others, which he defends on the basis of Matthew 5 and selections from Pauline epistles.<sup>6</sup> In this discussion, Ptolemy was engaging a Marcionite view of scripture and of God, but scholars disagree on whether his metaphysical system is an adaptation or rebuttal of Marcion.<sup>7</sup> Ptolemy supports his metaphysical system with language of simplicity, so I think Marksches is right to

4 Crawford, "The *problemata* of Tatian."

5 Emily J. Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century: The case of Tatian* (London: Routledge, 2003), 20–51; Crawford, "The *problemata* of Tatian," 552–555.

6 *ep.* 5.1 (SC 24.60). For Ptolemy, the Law of Moses is corrupt (intermediary level) because the Saviour condemns divorce (*ep.* 4.3–10 from Matthew 19:6–8), and the tradition of the elders is corrupt (inferior level) because the Saviour condemns the neglecting of parents (*ep.* 4.11–13 with Matthew 15:4–9). He argues for a tripartite view of the Law of God (*ep.* 5.1–6.6) in which he twice alternates between Matthew 5 (*ep.* 5.1–7; 6.1–5) and Paul (*ep.* 5.8–15; 6.6), focusing all along on the Saviour's work of abolishing the corrupted Law (*lex talionis* in Mt 5:38) and fulfilling the pure Law (decatalogue in Mt 5:21–26). In this argument, Paul is used to highlight the spiritual meaning of the figurative law (spiritual offerings from Eph 5:19 or Col. 3:16; circumcision of the heart from Rom 2:29, and citations of 1 Cor 5:7, Eph 2:15 and Rom 7:12 in *ep.* 6.6). Ptolemy was using both the Gospels and Paul as mutual support for the same conclusion.

7 Winrich Löhr claims the *Letter to Flora* can be characterised as "moderately Marcionite with a hint of Platonism," while Christopher Marksches calls this work an "anti-Marcionite" polemic (for it rejects *lex talionis* and argues for three, instead of two, Principles). Winrich Löhr, "La doctrine de Dieu dans la lettre a Flora de Ptolémée," *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 75, no. 2 (1995): 188. "d'un marcionitisme modéré par des touches platonisantes." Marksches, "New Research on Ptolemaeus Gnosticus," 232–234, 37, 48.

argue that Ptolemy was opposing Marcion's system. As Andrew Radde-Gallwitz has argued, Ptolemy sought to avoid the problems posed by a corrupted law by introducing an intermediary demiurge between the corrupted word and the simple Father.<sup>8</sup> The *Letter to Flora* moves from Law to First Principles, arguing that the tripartite givers of the law and the tripartite law of God proves a tripartite deity with distinct essences:

The Adversary's essence is corruption and darkness (for it is material and variegated), but the unbegotten Father of the entirety's essence is incorruption and self-existing light, simple and singular. The Intermediary's essence, while presenting a certain double power, is an image of the better.<sup>9</sup>

Τοῦ μὲν γὰρ ἀντικειμένου ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία φθορά τε καὶ σκότος (ὕλικός γὰρ οὗτος καὶ πολυσχιδής), τοῦ δὲ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων τοῦ ἀγεννήτου ἡ οὐσία ἐστὶν ἀφθαρσία τε καὶ φῶς αὐτοόν, ἀπλοῦν τε καὶ μονοειδές· ἡ δὲ τοῦτου οὐσία διττὴν μὲν τινα δύναμιν προήγαγεν, αὐτὸς δὲ τοῦ κρείττονός ἐστιν εἰκὼν.<sup>10</sup>

The Intermediary Demiurge is described as the creator of the universe but different in essence and nature (ἕτερος ... οὐσίας in *ep.* 7.4; ἑτέρας οὐσίας τε καὶ φύσεως in *ep.* 7.6) from both the Adversary and the Father, but an “image of the better.”<sup>11</sup> Regardless of how one interprets the identity of the Demiurge and Saviour,<sup>12</sup> the differentiation of essence between Father and Intermediary is

8 Radde-Gallwitz, *Transformation of Divine Simplicity*, 21–36. See especially p. 26: “for Ptolemy, Marcion's gravest error is mistaking the moral status of the mediating second principle, or perhaps of overlooking the need for the second principle altogether. Ptolemy agrees with Marcion that divine activity in scripture cannot be attributed directly to the good God. But he takes his unnamed opponent, whom we can identify with Marcion or perhaps some of his followers, to imply that the second principle, who is active in scripture as creator and judge, is evil, whereas Ptolemy argues that he is just.”

9 Translation from Bradley K. Storin, “Ptolemy, *Letter to Flora*,” in *God*, ed. A. Radde-Gallwitz (Cambridge: CUP, 2017), 9.

10 *ep.* 7.7 (SC 24.70).

11 *ep.* 7.4–7 (SC 24.68–70).

12 This argument was first put forth by Quispel, but has recently been defended, particularly by Thomassen and Schmid. Quispel, *SC* 24, 77–79; Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 122–124; Herbert Schmid, “Ist der Soter in Ptolemäus’ *Epistula ad Floram* der Demiurg? Zu einer These von Christoph Marksches,” *ZAC* 15 (2011): 249–271. Marksches and Löhr both claim that the Saviour and the Demiurge are the same, with Marksches’ 2011 article containing a direct response to Schmid. See Marksches, “New Research on Ptolemaeus Gnosticus,” 240–244; Marksches, “Individuality in Some Gnostic Authors: With a few remarks on the

the key. In the system of Ptolemy, the Father is simple and the source of all, but because what is made reflects the essence and nature of the maker (*ep.* 7.8),<sup>13</sup> and because corruption exists, therefore, the lower law and material creation must be attributed to a lower demiurge (thereby separating the simple Father from corruption and darkness). Löhr argues that the gap between the demiurge and the Father is not that great, because the demiurge reflects the justice of the Father at an inferior level.<sup>14</sup> However, the argument in Ptolemy is not a “glass half-empty or half-full” description of the demiurge’s goodness or justice, but a logical move that separates the activity of creation from the Father by utilizing the philosophical language of simplicity. Ptolemy purposely leaves one specific question of divine generation unanswered. Although he claims that it is in the nature of the good to beget good, he encourages Flora not to be disturbed by the question of how an intermediate or corrupt essence came to exist from a simple, unbegotten, and good source (*ep.* 7.8–10). Ptolemy does not explain divine generation, but instead simply states that the simple God generates a being apart from himself that is of a different substance.

Throughout Book 2, Irenaeus engages his opponents’ attempts to distance God from creation, but precisely at *haer.* 2.17, Irenaeus focuses on this question of divine generation, asking how a simple God could generate powers or a demiurge of a different substance. Nine separate times he engages the language of same/different substance, directly opposing the kind of claim made about the simple Father in the *Letter to Flora*.<sup>15</sup> Ptolemy and Irenaeus acknowledge a change in nature (from a perfect cause to an imperfect result) in different

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interpretation of Ptolemaeus, *Epistula ad Floram*,” 427–430; Löhr, “La doctrine de Dieu dans la lettre a Flora de Ptolémée.”

13 *ep.* 7.8 (SC 24.72), τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φύσιν ἔχοντος τὰ ὅμοια ἑαυτῷ καὶ ὁμοούσια γεννᾶν τε καὶ προφέρειν.

14 Löhr, “La doctrine de Dieu dans la lettre a Flora de Ptolémée,” 182. “D’un côté, il souligne qu’il faut distinguer entre la bonté du Père et la justice du créateur. D’un autre côté, pour Ptolémée, l’écart entre le premier Dieu et le second Dieu n’est pas si grand; le demiurge représente la justice supérieure du Père à un niveau inférieur.” His logic in this case does not hold however, because, as he notes, the Father was also bound by the “necessity” from *lex talionis*. He notes that Ptolemy only argues that the law is inconsistent with nature of the father because of “necessity” in the world. “Ainsi Ptolémée n’hésite pas à envisager la possibilité que la loi du talion corresponde à la nature du Père—mais, aussitôt, il se corrige avec la phrase suivante: Non, la loi du talion est le résultat de la nécessité qui règne dans le monde d’ici-bas.” Löhr, “La doctrine de Dieu dans la lettre a Flora de Ptolémée,” 182. Irenaeus argues against the view that God would be bound to necessity precisely in this way in *haer.* 2.5.4, as seen below.

15 Simons, “God and *eiusdem substantiae* in *Against Heresies* 2.17–18.”

conceptual places. Ptolemy inserts the change of nature into his metaphysics, because only a demiurge of a corrupted substance could create a corrupted material world. Irenaeus inserts it between metaphysics and physics, because the creator/creature differentiation means that the creator, who is uncaused, necessarily creates beings of a different nature, namely, something caused. They both agree that God is simple and acknowledge the existence of different natures, but Ptolemy depends on a divine generation of a different substance that separates the generator from the generated.

In direct opposition to this kind of view, Tatian's *Oration Against the Greeks* describes the Word as springing forth from God's will of simplicity (ἀπλότητος), but he rejects distinction between the generator and the generated.

By the will of his simplicity, the Word sprang forth and did not come in vain, but the Word became the "firstborn" work of the Father. Him we know as the beginning of the universe. He came into being by partition, not by section, for what is severed is separated from its origin, but what has been partitioned takes on a distinctive function and does not diminish the source from which it has been taken.

θελήματι δὲ τῆς ἀπλότητος αὐτοῦ προπηδᾷ λόγος· ὁ δὲ λόγος οὐ κατὰ κενοῦ χωρήσας ἔργον πρωτότοκον τοῦ πατρὸς γίνεται. τοῦτον ἴσμεν τοῦ κόσμου τὴν ἀρχήν. γέγονεν δὲ κατὰ μερισμόν, οὐ κατὰ ἀποκοπήν· τὸ γὰρ ἀποτμηθὲν τοῦ πρώτου κεχώρισται, τὸ δὲ μερισθὲν οἰκονομίας τὴν διαίρεσιν προσλαβὼν οὐκ ἐνδεᾶ τὸν ὅθεν εἰληπται πεποιήκεν.<sup>16</sup>

First, Tatian uses the language of partition (κατὰ μερισμόν) and rejects division (ἀποκοπήν). For Tatian, that which is generated remains unseparated and indistinguishable from the generator. In contrast, Irenaeus does not use the language of partition though he does regularly reject separation. Second, Tatian illustrates divine generation with the metaphors of a fire being kindled from torch to torch without being reduced and of a word being spoken without the speaker being reduced, metaphors which were prominent in his teacher, Justin, and later used by Irenaeus. However, as argued by Matthew Crawford, what is absent from this passage is equally as important as what is present.<sup>17</sup> While in some ways Tatian uses language that is similar to Justin, he omits

16 *orat.* 5. Translation adapted from Whittaker, *Tatian: Oratio ad Graecos and fragments*, 10–11.

17 See Crawford, "The *problemata* of Tatian," 553–555. Cf. Roman Hanig, "Tatian und Justin. Ein Vergleich," VC 53, no. 1 (1999).



any descriptions that retain a distinction between the Father and the Logos, instead using the language of Justin's opponents. In particular, Tatian rejects the view that the Logos was separated from God, and when explaining the metaphor of a torch being lit from fire, he omits Justin's clarification that the first fire appears to have its own existence.<sup>18</sup> Justin had argued that the fires of different torches are distinct (ἕτερα), but the original fire was not reduced and remained the same. Tatian refers to the many torches that do not reduce the original torches, but is silent about distinction. Irenaeus does not follow Justin exactly. He adopts and develops Justin's view of a distinct and subordinate Logos by affirming the "sameness and unity" between Father and Logos,<sup>19</sup> and by using the same scriptural references of the fire from the burning bush in Exodus 3 to do it.<sup>20</sup> However, as it relates to divine generation, Irenaeus notes that torches will differ (*distabunt*) in size though their light is the same, and fires do not differ in "age" or substance, but only in their lighting (*accessionem*).<sup>21</sup> Irenaeus does not deny a distinction between the torches, but rejects a difference of substance or age. Irenaeus develops Justin's metaphor of fire without adopting his view of the Logos, but he never follows Tatian's language of partition and his rejection of distinction. Lastly, Tatian's larger view removes any creative agency from the Logos, and he consistently attributes actions of the Incarnate Christ, such as healing, suffering, or final judgement, to God and never to Christ.<sup>22</sup> This view of the Logos is incompatible with Irenaeus' descriptions of the Word-Son.<sup>23</sup> Tatian's use of the language of simplicity to describe divine generation results in a lack of distinction between the generator and the generated Logos, a description which cannot be paralleled in Irenaeus.

Two opposing views of the simple God's activity of generating were already present in the second century. Irenaeus rejected separation between God and his powers, as held by Ptolemy, but he did not adopt Tatian's view, which rejected distinction in God. Irenaeus did not follow the extant extreme view of Tatian that would most easily contrast his opponents' view, but instead, he retained a sense of distinction in divine generation.

18 The relevant citations in Justin are from 1 *apol.* 63 and *dial.* 128.

19 Jackson Lashier, "Irenaeus as Logos Theologian," VC 66, no. 4 (2012).

20 See *dial.* 128; *haer.* 3.6.2.

21 *haer.* 2.17.4 (SC 294.160–162).

22 Crawford, "The *problemata* of Tatian," 554–555.

23 For a summary on scholarly debates, and an argument that Irenaeus' Christology retains a distinction between Father and Son, see Chapter 3 in Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 104–138.

## 2 Metaphors for Divine Generation in Irenaeus (*Haer.* 2.17.2)

In *haer.* 2.17, Irenaeus examines metaphors of divine generation, and divine simplicity is his operating principle.<sup>24</sup> Most of this passage is negative polemic, and therefore it functions primarily as a refutation of his opponents' position, though his own position can be discerned. Irenaeus introduces three different kinds of metaphors for understanding divine generation, and he explores the implications of each:

It will be asked, therefore, how the remaining Aeons were emitted? Were they united to the one who sent them out, like a single ray of the sun; or [were they sent out] completely<sup>25</sup> and individually,<sup>26</sup> so that every single one of them might be separate and have its own form, like a person [coming] from another person or a bull from another bull, or according to germination, like a branch of a tree? Or did they emerge of the same substance with those who sent them, or having a substance from another kind of substance? And were they emitted at the same time, so they are the same age, or according to some kind of order, so that some would be older and others younger? And [was it] simple and uniform and altogether equal and similar to itself, like Spirit and Light were emitted, or [was it] composite and different, dissimilar in its members.<sup>27</sup>

Quaeretur igitur, quemadmodum emissi sunt reliqui Aeones? Vtrum uniti ei qui emisit, quemadmodum a sole radii, an efficaciter et partiliter, uti sit unusquisque eorum separatim et suam figurationem habens, quemadmodum ab homine homo et a pecude pecus, aut secundum germinationem, quemadmodum ab arbore rami? Et utrum eiusdem substantiae exsistebant his qui se emiserunt, an ex altera quadam substan-

24 Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 119–120.

25 Rousseau back-translates this as ἀποτελέω (produce/render/complete/finish), and uses it in its adverbial form ἀποτελεστικῶς. Rousseau also links this work with 2.28.3, where the Greek of this adverbial form is transliterated in the Latin text. (SC 294.158; 294.276; 293.266–267). The word reappears in *haer.* 2.17.3.

26 Harvey here notes that while two editions understand this pairing as ποιητικῶς καὶ μεριστῶς, he prefers ἐνεργῶς καὶ χωριστῶς with “ἐνεργῶς being to δυνατῶς as *esse* is to *posse*” (Hv 1.307), n. 1.

27 Rousseau here back-translated ἀπλοῖ and links the ὁμοιμελής from 2.13.3 with this last line using ἀναμοιομελεῖς, and suggests looking at Sagnard, *La Gnose valentinienne*, 97–98 (SC 293.267).

tia substantiam habentes? Et utrum in eodem emissi sunt, ut eiusdem temporis essent sibi, an secundum ordinem quendam, ita ut antiquiores quidam ipsorum, alii uero iuueniores essent? Et utrum simplices quidam et uniformes et undique sibi aequales et similes, quemadmodum spiritus et lumina emissa sunt, an compositi et differentes, dissimiles membris suis?<sup>28</sup>

He asks a series of questions, stemming from different metaphors for understanding generation. First, he asks if divine generation is more comparable to a ray of light, animal or human generation, or a branch from a tree. As his argument develops, he explores the implications of each metaphor, (A) separated generation, like a human or an animal (*haer.* 2.17.3), (B) generation of light, like fire in a torch (*haer.* 2.17.4), stars (*haer.* 2.17.5), or the sun (*haer.* 2.17.7a), and (C) the generation of branches from a tree (*haer.* 2.17.6). Irenaeus does not entirely reject or accept any of the metaphors for divine generation, rather, he uses each metaphor to reiterate the same point: either God is all passible, or all impassible. There cannot be one part of God that is passible and responsible for creation, while another part of God is impassible and separated from the activity of creation, as his opponents' argument implies. However, within these metaphors there are four principles of divine generation to which Irenaeus continually returns, highlighted with four contrasts. These principles were first laid out by Briggman and were further clarified by Ip. The four pairs of opposites are: (1) either the generated remains united with the generator or is separated; (2) either the generated is of the same substance as the generator or is of a different substance; (3) either the generated is contemporaneous with the generator or has a temporal ordering; and (4) either the generated is simple, single, and singular with the generator, or it is composite, different, and dissimilar.<sup>29</sup> Ip rightly argues that the first three principles are summed up in the fourth, so generation that is united, contemporaneous and of the same substance is summed up in a generation that is simple, uniform, equal, and similar.

28 *haer.* 2.17.2 (SC 294.158).

29 Briggman argues that, in the context of divine simplicity, for Irenaeus, the three principles of divine generation require that God and his generated powers are: (1) of the same substance; (2) contemporaneous; and (3), united. Ip adds divine simplicity as the fourth principle of this list, that God and his generated powers are (4) simple, single, and singular. Ip's organization is more straightforward, though they both make the same point. Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 130–136; Ip, *Origen of Alexandria and the Emergence of Divine Simplicity before Nicaea*, 56.

In my reading of *haer.* 2.17, Irenaeus does not reject one metaphor in favour of another, but rather each metaphor is used to reject the insertion of passion into descriptions of God's powers. In contrast, Ip (following Briggman) has argued that Irenaeus rejects the human metaphor and adopts the metaphor of light, which in turn allows him to argue that God's powers are identical to one another without distinction. In his reading, the metaphor of human generation negatively explains Principle 1 of divine generation (united generation), that God's powers are not generated completely and separately (*efficabiliter et partiliter*), and so he concludes that Irenaeus rejects the metaphor of human generation. He argues that, instead, Irenaeus prefers the metaphor of generated light since it is described alongside that which is simple (*haer.* 2.17.2). This metaphor of light is affirmed in the next two principles of divine generation, and it positively illustrates that God's powers are generated contemporaneously and are of the same substance. Ip draws particular principles from particular metaphors, so Irenaeus illustrates Principle 1 (united generation) by rejecting the metaphor of human generation and he illustrates Principle 2 (generation of the same substance) and Principle 3 (contemporaneous generation) by using the metaphor of the generation of light because the product is of the same substance and contemporaneous with its source. In the end, Ip concludes that, for Irenaeus, God is identical with his divine powers because in the explanation of the metaphor of light, fire remains united to its source and two torches can be reunited, which suggests that there is not distinction between the generator and the generated power.<sup>30</sup> If one reads these metaphors as Ip has done, then Irenaeus allows for the generated Word to be reunited with the Father in a way that makes the Father and Son indistinguishable. However, this is not the only plausible, or the more probable, reading.

First, in his definition of divine simplicity Irenaeus already argued that metaphors, specifically the metaphor of light, cannot be univocally used of God. He is bound to the scriptural terminology that uses metaphors from creation to describe God, but he rejects applying these created qualities to God, and so he establishes parameters for what these metaphors can or cannot mean. Recall that Irenaeus argued that the human process of thinking and speaking in the metaphor of a spoken word cannot apply human affections and passions to God (*haer.* 2.13.1–3; see Chapter 2). He also briefly refers to the metaphor of light to describe God generating (*haer.* 2.13.4–5) and the metaphor of a circle to describe God containing (*haer.* 2.13.6). He concludes that the metaphors of word and light must be qualified:

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30 Ip, *Origin of Alexandria and the Emergence of Divine Simplicity before Nicaea*, 66–68.

It will be appropriate and right that he be called mind who contains all things, but not similar to the thinking of humans. He will be most appropriately called light, but nothing like light according to us.

Sensus enim capax omnium bene ac recte dicitur, sed non similis hominum sensui; et lumen rectissime dicitur, sed nihil simile ei quod est secundum nos lumini.<sup>31</sup>

God's word and light do not reflect the composite nature of what is created, particularly the smallness of humans. However, Irenaeus does use some human implications for his argument. God's mind is not emitted away or separated from God, just as the human mind does not have a separate existence away from the person (*haer.* 2.13.3, 5). For Irenaeus, the human metaphor of speech is useful for removing certain interpretive options when used of God. Similarly, though God is nothing like light experienced by humans, the ray of light from the sun "participates" (from *participare*) in the sun just as all who are in the Father participate equally of the Father.<sup>32</sup> Because God is simple, whatever else these metaphors mean, they cannot ascribe separation, reduction or parts to God. Thus, although contrary powers, such as darkness/light or ignorance/knowledge, exist in creation, opposite powers cannot be attributed to a "part" of God, and they cannot coexist because they are mutually exclusive. Instead, Irenaeus claims that God's Mind, Word, and Life are "equal and similar and one" and God is all light, therefore God's powers and names are mutually entailing (*haer.* 2.13.8–9). Irenaeus uses metaphors to eliminate interpretations that separate or reduce God, but he insists that they cannot be applied univocally.

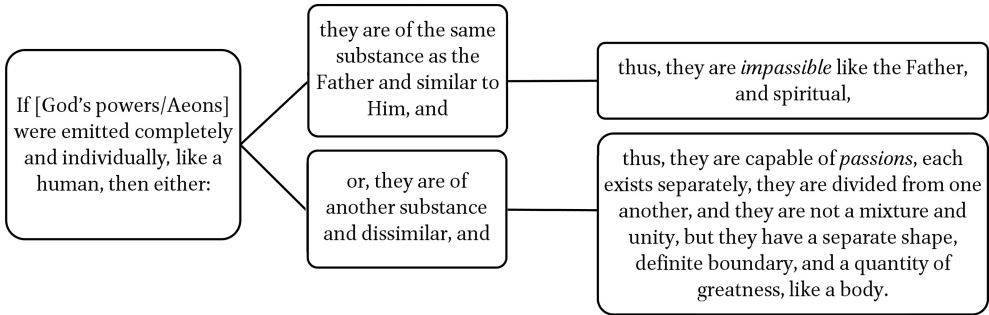
Second, Irenaeus does not reject human generation and accept the generation of light as appropriate metaphors for divine generation, but he uses the explanation of each metaphor to drive home his four principles of divine generation. Based on *haer.* 2.17.2, Briggman and Ip have argued that Irenaeus prefers the metaphor of light, since he aligns the metaphor of light, spiritual generation, and what is simple, equal, and similar. However, I suggest that Irenaeus' argument is more complex. While simple generation is illustrated by the metaphor of light, Irenaeus does not adopt it and reject the others. Whether exploring human generation, germination of a tree, or generation of different kinds of light, the one thing that remains consistent is his claim that God and

31 *haer.* 2.13.4 (SC 294.136).

32 *haer.* 2.13.7 (SC 294.120–122). The verbal or nominal forms of *participare* appear four times in this passage.

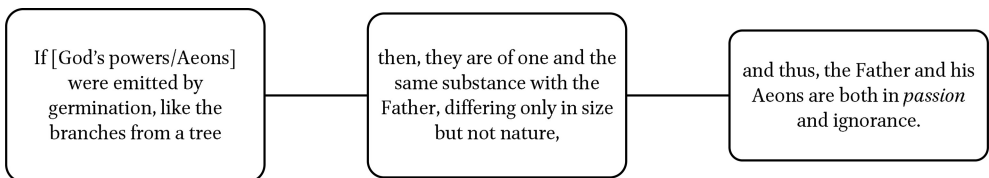
his powers are either all passible or all impassible, particularly through language of “same” and “similar.”

This is first seen in his explanation of the metaphor of human generation (*haer.* 2.17.3), and the logic of his argument shows the implications of the human metaphor of generation: either the Father and all his powers are impassible and spiritual, or they are passible and composite.<sup>33</sup>



Irenaeus notes that passion is the point of friction, and he acknowledges that this debate seeks the source of corruption (cf. *haer.* 2.17.9–11). If the Aeons are of a different substance and dissimilar, then they cannot be described in the spiritual language of a simple God, but they must be described with language of a composite human. With human generation, there is a possibility of “same substance” and similar generation. However, his opponents insert corruption after the Father but before the creation of the world, which means that corruption occurs in the realm of God's powers. Irenaeus asks how a dissimilar substance, which leads to corruption, entered the Pleroma (*haer.* 2.17.3). If the metaphor of human generation is used to defend a generation of a different substance and dissimilar nature of corruption, then this language, which is characteristic of bodies, cannot be employed to describe God.

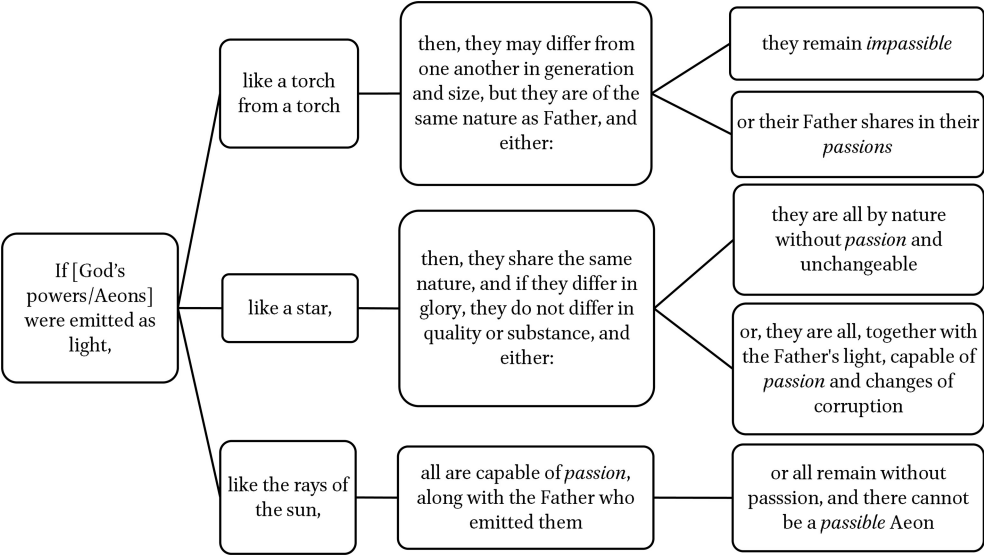
Irenaeus retains his focus on same substance and similar nature when exploring the metaphor of germination (*haer.* 2.17.6):



33 For the sake of clarity, I have opted to provide Irenaeus' argument in graph form. For the best translation of these passages, see Unger and Dillon, *ACW* 65, 56–57.

In this metaphor, once again, Irenaeus insists that God’s powers are of the same substance as the Father, and while they might differ in size (*magnitudinem*), they will not differ in nature (*naturam*).<sup>34</sup> Rather, and he explains this metaphor with another metaphor, the Aeons would complete the greatness of the Father (*magnitudinem complentes Patris*) like fingers complete the hand. Again, he focuses on the claim that if the Aeons share in passion and ignorance, then the Father does as well. Even in this metaphor of germination, God’s powers have the same substance and nature as the Father.

Lastly, and in two separate sections, Irenaeus explores the metaphor of light. First, he describes light from a torch and from a star (*haer.* 2.17.4–5), and then as rays of the sun (*haer.* 2.17.7a). He first introduces the rays of the sun as a united generation that contrasts human generation, and light is described alongside what is spiritual, as simple, uniform, and equal and similar to itself (*simplices ... et uniformes et undique sibi aequales et similes* in *haer.* 2.17.2). At first glance this would suggest that light is his chosen metaphor for divine generation, however, Irenaeus does not treat all light in the same way. Instead, he separates kinds of light to come to the same conclusion as with the other metaphors:



Once again, in each case, his argument concludes that, regardless of what kind of light one is using as a metaphor, the source must have a similar nature and

34 *haer.* 2.17.6 (SC 294.164).

the same substance to what is generated. The metaphor of light cannot be used to support the view that one of God's Aeons/powers is passible while the rest are impassible.

For the metaphor of light, Irenaeus echoes philosophical language on light. In Plato's *Timaeus*, fire and light were described as consistent from start to finish, alike both in their source and as experienced by the eye or touch (*Tim* 45B–D), and he describes different kinds of light and fire (*Tim* 58D). Scholars have speculated that Irenaeus' description of light comes from a Stoic source, and there are some similarities with Philo, but a conclusive source has not been found.<sup>35</sup> It is very possible that Irenaeus cited some kind of philosophical source, because his language reflects the later commentary tradition, particularly when he differentiates between kinds of light,<sup>36</sup> for although he describes light as simple and united,<sup>37</sup> he also describes fire as a material substance (*substantiam materiae*).<sup>38</sup> Irenaeus insists that the fire of many torches are united and one light, so even if torches are lit in sequence or in different places, their light is contemporaneous and of the same substance. Irenaeus differentiates between different kinds of light (fire, stars, and the sun), but in all cases he argues that their generation remains consistent and similar with their source, and whether describing pure heavenly light (the sun or stars), or perishable fire that is mixed with air, they both participate in their own same kind of light. Irenaeus explores the different categories and kinds of light and fire in order to support the same conclusion: the metaphors of light and fire do not

35 Stead suggests the Stoic source, and Briggman provides parallels with Philo. Stead, *Divine Substance*, 196; Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 128, n. 78.

36 Proclus, for example, differentiates between light, flame, and ember and describes them as a scaling down of fire from heaven to earth (*In Ti.* 2.8), and while he calls fire material (*In Ti.* 2.43), he calls the light from the sun immaterial (according to *On Light* in Philoponus *contra Proclum* 18). While there are different kinds of light and fire, the source and generation remain consistent and similar, and whether describing pure heavenly light (the sun or stars) or perishable fire that is mixed with air, they both participate in fire (including the light of the sun; *In Ti.* 2.9).

37 Syrianus argues, "the light of each lamp is simple and immaterial and is not divided or parted, but is united with its source and so attached to it that it exists when the source is shining, and departs when the source leaves." *Met.* 85. For translation, see Richard Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200–600AD*, 3 vols. (Ithica, New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 2.276.

38 *haer.* 2.17.4 (294.169). Commentaries on Plato and Aristotle differentiated kinds of light as a body, an immaterial body, or incorporeal, for though light has an effect on matter and fire is similar to matter, the same light of many lamps can occupy the same space, unlike matter. See Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200–600AD*, 274–283.



allow for a different substance or dissimilar passion to be introduced into metaphysics because each kind of light substance remains the same, from source to effect. He does not deny different kinds of fire or light, but he insists that fire is contemporaneous, even with sequential torches, and it retains a similar nature and is of the same substance, whether it is heavenly light or a material torch.

Irenaeus does not entirely reject the metaphor of human generation, nor does he totally adopt the metaphor of light, but rather, he engages each to support his four principles of divine generation. Irenaeus' interaction with materiality and his concern with Principle 1 continue after the metaphor of human generation. Previously, he had criticised the metaphor of human generation because it used language of composite bodies, but light as a "material substance" would require a similar critique in relation to torches (2.17.4). Materiality remains part of generation, whether of humans or of light. Furthermore, with Principle 1, the generator must remain united to what is generated, and although in human generation the generating body is spatially separated from the generated body and is not united to it (*haer.* 2.17.3), this issue is complicated with light. In the generation of light, two spatially separate torches of corporeal light can occupy the same space, and they can also be brought together spatially to reflect their ontological unity (2.17.4). The lighting of different torches does not completely fulfill Principle 3 (contemporaneous generation) but it does fulfill Principle 1 (united generation). However, this unity does not mean that the metaphor of light rejects distinction between source and product for, as noted by Briggman, the distinction between the sun and its rays is not eliminated by their unity.<sup>39</sup> The metaphor of light also explores Principle 1 (united generation), so this principle cannot be relegated to a negative exploration of the metaphor of human generation. Irenaeus highlights difficulties in the metaphor of light, so one cannot say that he simply accepts it. Rather, as stated in *haer.* 2.13, light in regard to God is nothing like light experienced by humans. The metaphor of light is useful insofar as it removes certain interpretations, since all God's powers are either impassible or passible, and it illustrates the four principles of divine generation.

The consistent part of Irenaeus' argument is not his rejection or acceptance of a particular metaphor, but his adherence to his four principles of divine generation. These four principles outline Irenaeus' particular view of divine generation, and, as Ip has stated, Principle 4 sums up the other three. I suggest that it is also the one that most clearly retains language of distinction. Prin-

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39 See p. 135 in Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, n. 103.

ciples 1 and 2 primarily express unity, while Principles 3 and 4 retain language of distinction. In Principle 1 (united generation), unity is explored spatially and ontologically, while in Principle 2 (generation of the same substance), unity is emphasised with the language of “same.” For Principle 3 (contemporaneous generation), unity is emphasised in regard to time and hierarchy (cf. *haer.* 2.1.2), but the question of sequence is raised in a way that does not reduce unity. Lastly, in Principle 4, God’s powers are “simple and uniform and equal and similar to itself,” (*simplices quidam et uniformes et undique sibi aequales et similes*), specifically rejecting composite descriptions.<sup>40</sup> This is clearly language of simplicity because it closely echoes the definition of divine simplicity, where God is “simple, and non-composite, and self-proportionate, and himself altogether similar and equal to himself” (*haer.* 2.13.3). The main thread in this argument of *haer.* 2.17, that God and all his powers are either passible or all are impassible, depends on the terminology of “similar” powers, terminology from his definition of simplicity that retains distinction. In each metaphor Irenaeus returns to the claim that either all God’s powers are impassible and incorruptible, or they are all passible and corruptible. He uses the language of “similar” comparatively, with the generated powers being similar to the generator (*similes generatori* in *haer.* 2.17.3) and similarly impassible (*similiter ... impassibilia* in *haer.* 2.17.5). This language of “similar” often complements the language of same substance, for he explains “same substance” with things that are similar and dissimilar (2.17.3), and he explains language of same substance with language of similar nature (2.17.5–6), and the result is, language of what is “similar” retains a sense of distinction that could be lost if one only has the language of “same.”<sup>41</sup> Principle 4 summarises Irenaeus’ argument, and it too retains distinction.

### 3 Distinction in a Simple, Uniform, Equal, and Similar Generation

Certain portions of *haer.* 2.17 lend themselves to the reading that God’s powers are identical and without distinction. The strongest evidence in favour of this

40 He notes that the metaphor of human generation uses language that is characteristic of a body, which is composite (*haer.* 2.17.3), and he describes the light of torches as composite (*haer.* 2.17.4), and he rejects describing the Father in a way that is composite (*haer.* 2.17.7).

41 This overlap between “same substance” and “similar nature” is philosophically cogent in light of Aristotle’s *Categories*, and its discussion on “same, similar, and different,” alongside “nature and substance,”—language which becomes important for Christian discourse of God. See Chapter 3 in Stead, *Divine Substance*.

reading comes from *haer.* 2.17.7b., where Irenaeus states that the Father *is* Mind, which would seem to suggest that the source and the powers are indeed identical. This is the precise passage used by scholars who read Irenaeus as Monarchian.<sup>42</sup> While Briggman claims that God's powers are identical in divine simplicity, when discussing the generated Word-Son, he argues for distinction between Father and Son, explicitly opposing scholars who claim that Irenaeus is Monarchian.<sup>43</sup> By contrast, Ip notes that one should be cautious of reading Irenaeus as proto-Trinitarian, because "by stressing the unity between the generator and the generated, [Irenaeus] seems to leave unclarified the status of the distinction between the generated-generator."<sup>44</sup> In many ways, Ip is right, and the debate in scholarship is evidence that Irenaeus can be read as a precursor to Monarchianism, without a clear distinction between Father and Son. A strong challenge to this reading can be made based on the latter parts of *Against Heresies*, where the distinction between the Father and the generated Word is clearer.<sup>45</sup> However, I think that a plausible reading of *haer.* 2.17 can retain language of distinction in the exploration of divine generation, particularly in the usage of Principle 4 alongside descriptions of God's Mind, Word, and Wisdom.

After exploring the different metaphors and the four principles of divine generation, Irenaeus asks how Word and Wisdom came to be affected by passion without this same passion affecting the original generating Father:

For the Father of All is not some kind of composite animal [being] apart from Mind, as we have shown, but Mind is Father and Father is Mind.

42 Scholars have used this line from *haer.* 2.17.7 as evidence for "the embarrassing truth" that Irenaeus sounds Monarchian. Even in light of passages like *haer.* 4.20, which explicitly show distinctions between Father, Son and Spirit, they have argued that this is insufficient to "clear" Irenaeus' name. R. Hübner, "Heis theos Jesus christos. Zum christlichen Gottesglauben im 2. Jahrhundert—ein Versuch," *Müncher theo. Zeitschrift* 47 (1966): 343; Hermann Joseph Vogt, "Monarchianismus im 2. Jahrhundert," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 179, no. 4 (1999): 254. Wilhelm Bousset is the usual starting point for the scholarly lineage that suggests that Irenaeus' thought is Monarchian. W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus* (Göttingen, 1926).

43 Chapter 3 of Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*.

44 Ip, *Origin of Alexandria and the Emergence of Divine Simplicity before Nicaea*, 67.

45 Briggman organises his third chapter to challenge, among other things, Monarchian readings of Irenaeus' text, and he uses the terminology of "reciprocal immanence" to describe this unity and distinction. Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 104–138.

Non enim, ut compositum animal quiddam, est omnium Pater praeter Nun, quemadmodum praeostendimus,<sup>46</sup> sed Nus Pater et Pater Nus.<sup>47</sup>

Elsewhere, Irenaeus has used the citation from Xenophanes to describe God as all Mind, rejecting an emission of Mind that separated it from the Father, for instead, the Father is all mind.<sup>48</sup> In that passage, he refers to Father, Mind, and Word, but does not deny that word is emitted, as he does for mind. Instead, he focuses on the Word, and argues that one cannot comprehend the generation of the Word. These two passages seem to be doing the same kind of work, and their description of Father as Mind can be read in light of God entirely having or being his powers. As in the definition of divine simplicity, this citation of Xenophanes does not reject distinction; but instead, as I have argued above, the use of Xenophanes sits within a tradition that continues to highlight distinction. If Irenaeus is being consistent, then as this passage continues, he does not reject distinction between Mind and Word. My reading pushes against the traditional ways this passage has been translated.<sup>49</sup> In my translation of the final sentence of this passage, I prioritise the two causal clauses and the emphasis on passion. If the two causal clauses are placed side-by-side, it seems like the statement about Mind is appositional, and the force of the sentence is on the repetition that generated powers remain perfect and impassible:

Therefore, it is necessary, that the Word that is from him, (and how much more so for Mind), since he is the Word, be perfect and impassible, and

46 Harvey suggests comparing with Empedocles, Aristotle, and Anaxagoras (Hv 1.309–310), n. 5.

47 *haer.* 2.17.7 (SC 294.164–166).

48 In *haer.* 2.28.5, Irenaeus emphasises the nominal and verbal implications of the citation of Xenophanes. “God thinks what he speaks and speaks what he thinks” and “[God’s] thought is his Word, and what he speaks he thinks. For his thought is his Word and his Word is his Mind; and the Mind that contains all things is the Father himself.”

49 In Unger’s translation, Father, Mind, and Word seem to be equated, and he even translates the Word as “springs from him” (translated from *ex eo*), which echoes Tatian’s claim that the non-distinguishable Word springs forth. Unger’s translation follows the word order and reads, “And so, the Word who springs from him, and much more so, Mind, since it is the Word, must necessarily be perfect and without passion.” In his translation, he translates *cum sit Logos* by following the word-order of the Latin sentence, with results in a reading that Nous (which in this sentence is in the accusative, not the nominative) is the Logos. However, in both clauses, the “cum sit/sint” refers back to the subject of each clause, the Logos in the first, and the emissions in the second. Unger and Dillon, *ACW* 65, 58.

that those emissions that are from him be of the same substance, since they are of him himself, and remain perfect and impassible and always similar with him who sent them.

Necesse est itaque

*et eum qui ex eo est Logos, immo magis autem ipsum Nun,  
cum sit Logos, perfectum et impassibilem esse;  
et eas quae ex eo sunt emissiones, eiusdem substantiae  
cum sint cuius et ipse, perfectas et impassibiles et semper similes  
cum eo perseuerare qui eas emisit.*<sup>50</sup>

This sentence does not remove a sense distinction between Mind and Word, but as has been the case in the rest of *haer.* 2.17, Irenaeus is again reiterating that if God's powers have passion and corruption, then the Father does too. In this sentence, Irenaeus does not explicitly confirm or deny a distinction between God's powers or between generator and generated, but rather, he is explicitly rejecting a generation that would insert passion or corruption. Instead of powers with a different substance or a dissimilar nature, these emitted powers must "remain perfect and impassible and always similar with him who sent them," which at the very least, retains a conceptual distinction for comparison between the generator and the generated, and remains based on the language of simplicity.

This subtle language of distinction continues. The Word always remains like him who sent him (*semper similes cum eo perseuerare qui eas emisit* in *haer.* 2.17.7). The Word is not ignorant (*non ignorat* in *haer.* 2.17.8) of the generator. God's powers are always near him (which can be translated as "assist him"; *semper ei adsistentes* in *haer.* 2.17.8). Distinction is implied in terms "similar," "not ignorant," and "near" another. This reading of *haer.* 2.17, which allows for a distinction between God and his powers, reflects their usage elsewhere. Other descriptions in Book 2 oppose a Word who is ignorant of the Father and argue that the Word, who is the Son, reveals the Father and is always with the Father.<sup>51</sup> If the focus of this passage is that God and his powers be all passible or all impassible, a reading of unity in distinction should be preferred.

50 *haer.* 2.17.7 (SC 294.166). The indentations are added here to show the parallel between the two clauses.

51 For example, in *haer.* 2.30.9, Irenaeus returns to his regular citation of Matthew 11:27 to argue that the Word, the Son, reveals the Father (based on the beginning of the verse which claims that the Word alone knows the Father, cited previously) because the Word, who is the Son, is always coexisting with the Father (*Semper autem coexistens Filius Patri*).

My reading of God's powers as mutually entailing, rather than identical, is further bolstered by the conclusion of this passage. When engaging different metaphors in *haer.* 2.17, he had argued that even if stars differ in size, they are not different in nature. However, in *haer.* 2.18.5 Irenaeus specifies that reduction (*demutationem*) is prohibited in discourse about God, because things of a similar nature cause one another to increase, not decrease:

For God did not need these things to make what he himself had pre-determined to be made, as if he did not have his own hands. For the Word and Wisdom are always with him, Son and Spirit, through whom and in whom (cf. Eph 4:6) he made everything freely and of his own accord, to whom he spoke, saying, "Let us make human(s) according to our image and likeness" (Gen 1:26).

Therefore, scripture says these things well, "First of all believe that there is one God, who established and completed and made everything from what did not exist (from nothing), who contains all and is contained by nothing/no one" (*Mand.* 1.1). It is also well-affirmed in the prophet Malachi, "Is there not one God who established us? Do we not all have one Father?" (Mal 2:10) Consequently the apostle says, "There is one God who is over all and in all of us" (Eph 4:6). In the same way the Lord said, "everything was given to me by my Father" (Matt 11:27), showing that everything was made by him, not by another, but he gave it to *him*. Nothing is missing from "in everything."

Quod enim simile est in simili non dissoluatur in nihilum neque perire periclitabitur, sed magis perseuerabit et augescet, quemadmodum ignis in igne, et spiritus in spiritu, et aqua in aqua; quae autem sunt contraria a contrariis patiuntur et uertuntur et exterminantur ...

Si igitur eiusdem substantiae cuius et uniuersum Pleroma ex eo emissus fuisset hic Aeon, numquam demutationem perciperet, cum esset in similibus et adsueta conuersans, spiritalis in spiritalibus ...<sup>52</sup>

Throughout this passage, Irenaeus argues that things of contrary nature endanger and destroy one another while things that are the same or similar will actually continue and increase (*perseuerabit et augescet*). He returns to metaphors of fire, air, water, the light from the sun, and animals of similar kind, to substantiate his claim that things which are the same or similar do not reduce

52 *haer.* 2.18.5 (SC 294.178–180).

or corrupt one another. This language of increase or decrease requires distinction, and this echoes his earlier argument against mutually exclusive powers of God. Just before introducing his definition of divine simplicity, Irenaeus had argued that Word and Silence, from his opponents' description of the Aeons of God, could not exist together as God's powers, for they are dissimilar (*dis-similis*), and are, in fact, mutually exclusive (*haer.* 2.12.5). Instead, he provides his view, that God's powers, such as Mind and Thought, are always united and understood in terms of each other. Just as water cannot exist without moisture, or fire without heat, so too God's Mind, Thought, Word, and Life, cannot be separated, should be united and always coexist (Chapter 2, section 2.1.2).<sup>53</sup> Now, in *haer.* 2.18.5, Irenaeus again refers to characteristics of fire and water, this time to show that fire in fire or water in water increase, rather than reduce, each other. Both passages are doing the same kind of work through the same metaphors to argue that God's generated powers are similar to the generator and to one another. Furthermore, in *haer.* 2.13.7, Irenaeus develops this imagery of water and light to claim that God's powers participate equally in God because they are mutually entailing, based on the claim that God is simple (Chapter 2, section 2.2.2), while here, Irenaeus again argues that God's generated powers are similar to the one who emitted them and same in substance due to their simple generation. Both passages use language that emphasises unity, with terminology like "same substance" and "simple," but they also retain language of distinction that reiterates the inseparable relationship between God's powers, for they are similar and increase each other. Irenaeus continues to depend on language that requires distinction as he reiterates the main point of this passage: that God's powers would not develop a different substance and nature through divine generation, but they would remain of the same substance and of a similar nature. Once again, in an argument primarily about unity, he retains the subtle language of distinction because he is depending on the concept of divine simplicity,

#### 4 Conclusion

In these metaphors of divine generation, Irenaeus does not oppose distinction between powers. Instead, he opposes the kind of separation that allows corruption, passion, or reduction to be introduced into discourse about God. First, the two extreme positions on divine generation (Ptolemy's view of God's

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53 *haer.* 2.12.2 (SC 294.98–100).

powers as separated and Tatian's view of God's powers as indistinguishable) were present in the works of authors contemporary to Irenaeus who used language of divine simplicity. However, though he is opposing Ptolemy's view and he is aware of Tatian's, Irenaeus does not reject distinction in language about God. Second, he does not univocally adopt the metaphor of light to describe divine generation, so the implication that two torches can again be united does not necessarily apply to Irenaeus' argument about God. In the rest of *Against Heresies*, while Irenaeus continues to use the metaphor of light to describe God, he also continues to use other metaphors, such as human generation (see discussion on the metaphor of the painting King and his son in Chapter 6, section 3.3), which prioritises distinction. Because of divine simplicity, all metaphors, including the metaphor of light, cannot be directly applied to God, as argued in Chapter 2. Rather, he uses each of the three metaphors to support his four principles of divine generation, and these principles, particularly the fourth, clearly retain a sense of distinction. In the third section, I showed that Irenaeus rejects language that implies God has anything composite or dissimilar, opposing co-existing contraries (*contrariis*) that would endanger, change, and destroy one another. Instead, he uses language of the same, similar and familiar things that preserve and increase one another and do not result in a change. These retain a sense of distinction, primarily opposing the claim that God's powers could be passible and could be the source of corruption and ignorance in the material world.<sup>54</sup> Because of Irenaeus' emphasis on unity, some parts of *haer.* 2.17 can seem to suggest that God's powers are identical without distinction. However, it can be anachronistic to expect terms that clearly distinguish his position as anti-Monarchian. On the other hand, he does not reject language of distinction, so my reading of this section, that God's powers are distinct in unity, is equally plausible. This argument returns to the terminology of the simple God, and by tracing his argument of divine simplicity from its definition to its usage in *haer.* 2.17, the preferred reading is that God's powers are generated as distinct in unity.

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54 Irenaeus concludes that this passion of his opponent's cosmology is more like a character from a love story. "But they [Valentinians] seem to me to give his Aeon the passion [of a character] who is both very loving and full of hate from the writings of the comic Menander. They had more of an understanding and mental conception of someone who had misfortune in love, than of a spiritual and divine substance (*spiritualis et diuinae substantiae*)." *haer.* 2.18.5 (SC 294.178–180).



## Divine Activity in the Hands of God Metaphor of *Haer.* 4.20

In this chapter I argue that implications of divine simplicity illumine the unity of activity expressed in the “Hands of God” metaphor, in a passage considered to be the climax of Irenaeus’ theology. This chapter addresses a potential challenge to my claim that divine simplicity sets parameters on speech about God, since at first glance, the hands of God metaphor could suggest that God has parts, contradicting the claim that God is simple. Yet Irenaeus’ account of divine simplicity does not, as I have argued, eliminate distinction in unity; and now I argue that the hands of God metaphor and associated claims about divine activity are consistent with this version of the claim that God is simple.

In section 1, I focus on the scriptural exegesis Irenaeus provides to support the “Hands of God” metaphor in *haer.* 4.20, and argue that it depends on and develops lines of exegesis from the argument of Book 2, exegesis that depends on divine simplicity.<sup>1</sup> Thus, I seek to show the connection between the exegesis for this theological metaphor and Irenaeus’ concept of divine simplicity. In section 2, I argue that the theological terminology used to explain divine simplicity in Book 2 is used to support the argument for this metaphor, particularly highlighting references to God’s Will, God as “containing, not contained,” and divine activity as *ipse a/per/in semetipso*. These concepts are central to the principle of divine simplicity in Book 2, and in *haer.* 4.20 they are used to describe unity and distinction in the unseparated activity of creation and redemption of the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit. Finally, I consider two modern readings of this metaphor, focusing on new, and necessary, implications in light of Irenaeus’ account of divine simplicity. First, Michael Slusser reads Irenaeus’ contrast between God’s greatness and love as a dichotomy between God’s transcendence and immanence, but based on divine simplicity, I argue that God’s greatness and love cannot be understood in terms of different parts of God. The

1 Other scholars have rooted theological arguments of Book 4 in Book 2. For the “trinitarian theology” of Irenaeus being rooted in Book 2, see Fantino, *La théologie d'Irénée*, 291–306; Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity*, 205–227. For the “pneumatology” of Irenaeus being rooted in Book 2, see Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit*, 105–147. For the exegesis that undergirds his theology of creation, see Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 65–100; Bingham, “Himself within Himself: The Father and His Hands in Early Christianity.”

contrast between love and greatness is, instead, a commitment to a differentiation between creator and creatures. Second, Anthony Briggman argues that Irenaeus adopted the metaphor of God's Hands from Theophilus after Book 2. I argue that, due to Irenaeus' description of the concept of divine simplicity, it is more likely that he had already adapted Theophilus' language in Book 2, but with some adjustments. In both Book 2 and Book 4, Irenaeus rejects language of God creating with instruments (*organis*; ὄργανον) or through assistants (ὑπουργός), since these would suggest parts, and instead he argues that God creates "himself in/through himself."

## 1 Scriptural Exegesis for the Hands of God Metaphor

Many scholars start their examination of the hands of God metaphor by looking for an external source, but I will focus on the way it depends on and develops Book 2. To some extent, this simply pushes the question of source back to Book 2, but this allows me to substantiate the first part of my argument, that *haer.* 4.20 relies on Book 2. Establishing an external source for Irenaeus' metaphor of the hands of God in creation has proven difficult. Mambrino and Lawson sought to establish a scriptural background for this metaphor, but Michel Barnes and Anthony Briggman have shown that the sheer number of possible passages results in unhelpful ambiguity.<sup>2</sup> Instead, Barnes focuses on 1 Clement 33:4 and *Fourth Esdras* 3:4–5 which describe the creation

<sup>2</sup> Barnes's list, which uses Lebreton's list, notes passages where Irenaeus refers to creation by two hands (*haer.* 4.praef. 4; 4.20.1; 5.1, 3; 5.5.1; 5.6.1; 5.153–154; 5.16.1; and 5.28.3; and *Dem.* 11, which includes the Armenian variant of *haer.* 4.7.4). Robinson was the first to note that this metaphor is first used in Book 4. The metaphor plays a key role in the argument of scholars like Briggman, who mark Book 4 as a major turning point in Irenaeus' theology. J.A. Robinson, *St. Irenaeus: Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching* (London: SPCK, 1920), 51; Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit*, 106–108, 22–23; Michel Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," *Nova et Vetera* 7, no. 1 (2009): 101, n. 08. For the scriptural background to this metaphor, see Lawson and Mambrino. Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus*; J. Mambrino, "Les deux mains de Dieu' chez s. Irénée," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 79 (1957). On p. 123, Lawson notes the theme in Num 32:11; Deut 5:15; 6:21; 7:8; 9:26; 11:2; 26:8; 34:12; 1 Ki 18:46; Ps 44:3; 71:18; Is 40:10, 12; 51:5, 9; 52:10; 53:1; Ez 3:14, 16, 22; 8:1; 37:1; along with several "finger of God" references. Briggman rightly criticises the ambiguity resulting from the summary of Biblical texts in Mambrino and Lawson. Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit*, 105–106. Barnes argues that, for examples, although many Psalms refer to God's hands (Ps 8:3–8; 103. 28–30; 110:6–7; 137:8; and 138:7–10), these do not refer to the creation of humanity and they are never referenced by Irenaeus, particularly Psalms 104 and 139 which both give reference to the Spirit. Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 102–103. Cf. Is 45:11–12; 66:2, and Acts 7:50 (citing Is 66).

of humanity through God's Hands, and which use the metaphor of the potter and clay as in *Wisdom of Sirach* and Romans 9:21. Briggman follows Barnes, and claims that the tradition of the hands imagery is "best characterised as Jewish."<sup>3</sup> Other scholars have proposed a dependence on Philo or Theophilus of Antioch, and while this latter option is certainly promising, again, a direct correlation remains elusive.<sup>4</sup> Briggman differentiates between the singular hand and plural hands of God and their direct description as God's Word, or Word and Wisdom, to suggest that Irenaeus became aware of Theophilus after Book 2, but both Theophilus and Irenaeus regularly refer to both the "hand" and the "hands" of God, and in *haer.* 2.30 Irenaeus refers both to God's Hand and God creating through his Word and Wisdom.<sup>5</sup>

Rather than merely adopting Theophilus of Antioch's argument, it seems that, as early as Book 2 Irenaeus is adapting it in ways that are retained in Book 4 (for further discussion on Theophilus of Antioch, see section 3.2 of this chapter). Instead of seeking an external source, I argue that the exegetical developments in *haer.* 4.20 are based on the exegesis of Book 2, which will then bolster my argument that the theology of Book 4 is based on Book 2 and divine simplicity. This does not exclude the other influences put forward by previous scholars, but simply highlights the ways that *haer.* 4.20 depends exegetically on Book 2.

The scriptural citations surrounding the metaphor of God's Hands reflect a dependence on Book 2, and Irenaeus continues to emphasise language of unity even when he develops portions of this exegesis. Irenaeus first refers to the Hand of God measuring the heavens by citing Isaiah 40:12 (*haer.* 4.19.2–3). This is the same passage used in *haer.* 2.30 prior to his creation summary and alongside a description of the God who cannot be measured by height, depth, length, or breadth (from Eph 3:18, also citing Eph 1:21; Jer 23:23). In both places, the interweaving of passages emphasises the God who is "containing, not con-

3 Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 102–103. Cf. Jeremiah 18:4–6. Briggman follows Barnes' list of references, and only adds the second-century citation of a Rabbi (linked to Psalms 119:73, and cited in Robert Grant's work on Theophilus). Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit*, 105–106.

4 The *Teachings of Silvanus* has also been explored, but does not seem to be a source for Irenaeus. David Runia rejects possible correlations between Irenaeus and Philo. See his disagreement with Grant and Hanson in D.T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 112, n. 99. Since 1930, scholarship has recognised the influence of Theophilus of Antioch on Irenaeus, particularly in this metaphor. See Chapter 5 in both of their books, along with Briggman's excursus. Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit*; Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity*.

5 For Briggman, *haer.* 3.8.2 and *haer.* 3.16.4 are key passages for arguing that Irenaeus began to depend on Theophilus while writing Book 3. See Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit*, 107.

tained.” Then he opens *haer.* 4.20 and his metaphor of God’s Hands, by citing many of the same biblical passages used to support his theology of creation and revelation in Book 2:

For God did not need these things to make what he himself had pre-determined to be made, as if he did not have his own hands. For the Word and Wisdom are always with him, Son and Spirit, through whom and in whom (cf. Eph 4:6) he made everything freely and of his own accord, to whom he spoke, saying, “Let us make human(s) according to our image and likeness” (Gen 1:26).

Therefore, scripture says these things well, “First of all believe that there is one God, who established and completed and made everything from what did not exist (from nothing), who contains all and is contained by nothing/no one” (*Mand.* 1.1). It is also well-affirmed in the prophet Malachi, “Is there not one God who established us? Do we not all have one Father?” (Mal 2:10) Consequently the apostle says, “There is one God who is over all and in all of us” (Eph 4:6). In the same way the Lord said, “everything was given to me by my Father” (Matt 11:27), showing that everything was made by him, not by another, but he gave it to *him*. Nothing is missing from “in everything.”

Neque enim indigebat horum Deus ad faciendum quae ipse apud se praeфинierat fieri, quasi ipse suas non haberet manus. Adest enim ei semper Verbum et Sapientia, Filius et Spiritus, per quos et in quibus omnia libere et sponte fecit, ad quos et loquitur, dicens: *Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram*,

\*Bene igitur scriptura quae dicit: *Primo omnium crede quoniam unus est Deus, qui omnia constituit et consummavit\* et fecit ex eo quod non erat ut essent omnia: omnium capax et qui a nemine capiatur*. Bene autem et in prophetis Malachias ait: *Nonne unus Deus qui constituit nos? Nonne Pater unus est omnium nostrum?* Consequenter autem et Apostolus: *Unus Deus, inquit, Pater, qui super omnes et in omnibus nobis*. Similiter autem et Dominus: *Omnia, inquit, mihi tradita sunt a Patre meo*, manifeste ab eo qui omnia fecit: non enim aliena, sed sua tradidit ei. In omnibus autem nihil subtractum est.

\*Καλῶς οὖν ἡ γραφή ἢ λέγουσα “Πρῶτον πάντων πιστεύουσιν ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ Θεὸς ὁ τὰ πάντα κτίσας καὶ καταρτίσας” \*<sup>6</sup>

6 *haer.* 4.20.1–2 (SC 100.624–628).

The influence of the exegesis of Book 2 can be seen in two main ways. First, *haer.* 2.2.5–6 provided a summary of the key passages, which Steenberg recognises are the central passages to Irenaeus' theology of creation: Genesis 1–2, Psalm 32/33, John 1, Ephesians 4:6, and *Mandate* 1.1 (see Chapter 1, section 3).<sup>7</sup> In *haer.* 4.20, only the Psalm is missing. Furthermore, Irenaeus' usage of Ephesians 4:6 and the God "above," "through," and "in" all shows the foundation for his language of the Father creating through the Word. Jeffrey Bingham focuses on Irenaeus' usage of Ephesians 4:6, and argues that this passage is the foundational piece to Irenaeus' theology of creation in Book 2.<sup>8</sup> The unity of divine activity between Father and Word is present in his foundational exegesis for creation. Fantino notes that in this passage about the Father and the Word, the first two prepositions ("above" and "through") are attributed to them respectively, and though not explicitly stated, the third ("in") would naturally be linked with Wisdom.<sup>9</sup> One cannot prove that Irenaeus fully worked out his pneumatology in Book 2, but the scriptural basis for creation as an activity of the Father through His Word was certainly present in Book 2. This leads to the first main area of development, as highlighted by Briggman. In *haer.* 2.30.9 he again describes God creating through his Word, and includes God ordering by his Wisdom. However, he claims that the Word is the Son, who was always existing with and revealing the Father; he does not explain the role of the Spirit. It is not until *haer.* 4.20.3 that Irenaeus describes God's Wisdom as the Spirit who was always with God, supported by Proverbs 3:19–20 and 8:22–31, to describe the Spirit's creating and revealing.<sup>10</sup> Irenaeus' exegesis of creation (*haer.* 2.2) is linked to his description of God's Word and Wisdom (*haer.* 2.30.9), and then the exegesis regarding the Spirit is developed in *haer.* 4.20.

In the second exegetical link, between *haer.* 2.30.9 and 4.20, Irenaeus intertwines creation and revelation by citing Matthew 11:27 with *Mandate* 1.1. While the emphasis is on God's Word, the Son, he also mentions God's Wisdom. Matthew 11:27 has already been central to Irenaeus' description of the Son revealing the Father,<sup>11</sup> but here Matthew 11:27 (no one *knows* the Father except the Son)

7 Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 65–67.

8 Bingham, "Himself within Himself: The Father and His Hands in Early Christianity," esp. 139–142.

9 Fantino, *La théologie d'Irénée*, 298–299.

10 Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit*, 130–134. Orbe shows that while Irenaeus depends on Theophilus for these passages, Theophilus never refers to Proverbs 8:27–31. See Antonio Orbe, *Teología de San Ireneo*, 4 vols. (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1996), 280–281, n. 21, and n. 23.

11 In *haer.* 4.20, Irenaeus seems to skip the first half of the verse about only the Son knowing

is then followed by John 1:18 (no one has *seen* God but the one and only Son).<sup>12</sup> Johannine exegesis about the *logos* courses through *haer.* 4.20, as John 1:14 will be cited within a few lines, and Ephesians 4:6 is read together with John 1:1–3. When he then cites John 1:18 alongside references to the Word as the key and lamb from the book of Revelation (citing Rev 3:7; and 5:3, 8, 9, 12), he inextricably links the language of creation and revelation.<sup>13</sup> As noted by Steenberg, Irenaeus' use of the conqueror from Revelation (also citing Mt 28:18) and its recapitulative implications for humanity (citing Col 1:18) should be read in the context of his account of creation.<sup>14</sup> Irenaeus himself notes this scriptural relationship between the end and the beginning: "Thus, he could join together (*conjungeret*) the end with the beginning."<sup>15</sup> Even in areas of development, Irenaeus is clearly depending on the exegesis used to describe divine activity in Book 2.

The exegesis in *haer.* 4.20 also outlines the unity of divine activity of revelation throughout scripture and through time in prophecy, the incarnation, and paternal glory. Irenaeus again uses different parts of scripture (Law, Prophets, Gospel, Epistle) and he merges the theme of knowing God (Matt 11:27) with seeing God (Jn 1:18) to argue that seeing God was always part of the plan of creation. To do this, first, Irenaeus cites the promise in Deuteronomy 5:24, that humanity would see God and live. He describes the interweaving of the different scriptural moments when God was seen: by the prophets who foresaw the advent, by those who saw the advent of the Word, and by those who saw the descent of the Spirit in the event of Pentecost.

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the Father (quoted nine times up to this point), and instead focuses on "everything" from the verse, which includes the world and humans, being made by the hands of God. See Luckhart, "Matthew 11,27 in the 'Contra Haereses' of St. Irenaeus."

12 John 1:18 is cited in *haer.* 4.20.6. To my knowledge, these two verses have not been studied in conjunction. However, in *haer.* 4.6, they are used alternately to show that knowledge and vision of God occur through the Son. Similarly, in *haer.* 4.20, both passages are referenced, though the weight falls on the Johannine version as the thrust of the argument is on vision of God.

13 This interpretive dependence on an eschatological interpretation reappears near the end of *haer.* 4.20, through citations from the books of Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation together, again emphasising God revealed through his Word. The same Word that created the world, was slain, and is King.

14 In *haer.* 5.18.2, he again uses Ephesians 4:6 and Colossians 1:18 in conjunction within a further elaboration of the creative work of the hands of God.

15 *haer.* 4.20.4 (SC 100.634) ut finem conjungeret principio; ἵνα τὸ τέλος συνάψῃ τῇ ἀρχῇ. This becomes the lens for Steenberg's understanding of Irenaeus' exegesis for creation. Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 49–60.

For some of them saw the prophetic Spirit and his works pouring gifts upon all flesh (cf. Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17), others saw the advent of the Lord and the ministry which was from the beginning, and as much as possible he completed the will of the Father in heaven and on earth (cf. Lk 10:21); others saw the paternal glory at the right time and they saw and heard him and they were with the people who would eventually hear (cf. 2 Pt. 1:16–21).<sup>16</sup> Therefore, God was manifested in this way: for this God the Father is revealed through everything, with the Spirit indeed working, with the Son actually ministering, with the Father actually approving, and with humankind actually being perfected for salvation.

Quidam enim eorum videbant Spiritum propheticum et operationes ejus in omnia genera charismatum effusa; alii vero adventum Domini et eam quae est ab initio administrationem, per quam perfecit voluntatem Patris quae est in caelis et quae est in terris; alii vero et glorias paternas temporibus aptas, et ipsis qui videbant et qui tunc audiebant et hominibus qui deinceps audituri erant. Sic igitur manifestabatur Deus: per omnia enim haec Deus Pater ostenditur, Spiritu quidem operante, Filio vero administrante, Patre vero comprobante, homine vero consummato ad salutem.<sup>17</sup>

The different moments in history and the distinct work of Father, Son, and Spirit are joined together in these scriptural passages. Prophecy and visions in Hosea 12:11 are joined with the unified, but distinct, work of God from 1 Corinthians 12:

As it was said through the prophet Hosea, “I multiplied visions and was represented by the hands of the prophets” (Hos 12:11). The apostle unveiled this saying, “There are various gifts, but the same Spirit, there are various ministries but one Lord, there are various operations/energies, but one God works all in all.”<sup>18</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for usefulness” (1 Cor 12:4–7).

16 In *haer.* 4.20.5–6, Irenaeus may be drawing from 2 Peter 1:16–21. It contains the elements of prophecy from the Holy Spirit, and it seems to refer to the testimony of the author who claims to be an eyewitness that saw the transfiguration, and it contains the glory from God the Father (θεοῦ πατρὸς ... τῆς μεγαλοπρεποῦς δόξης). This, I think, makes some sense of *haer.* 4.20.5, where the term “prophet” is applied to the Gospels.

17 *haer.* 4.20.6 (SC 100.642–644).

18 1 Corinthians 12 describes the energies of God and “all in all,” which could further support

Quemadmodum et per prophetam Osee ait: *Ego [inquit] visiones multiplicavi et in manibus prophetarum assimilatus sum.*<sup>19</sup> Apostolus autem idipsum exposuit, dicens: *Divisiones autem charismatum sunt, idem autem Spiritus; et divisiones ministeriorum sunt, et idem Dominus; et divisiones operationum sunt, idem autem Deus, qui operatur omnia in omnibus. Unicuique autem datur manifestatio Spiritus ad utilitatem.*<sup>20</sup>

Irenaeus uses 1 Corinthians 12 to demonstrate unity in divine activity between Father, Son, and Spirit. Multiplicity in activity (many gifts, ministries, and operations) still requires unity of source (one Spirit, Lord, and God). Thus, Irenaeus can say that the God who is invisible and indescribable is “in no way undiscoverable (*incognitus*).” Rather,

Everything someone learns is through his Word which is one God the Father, who contains all and reveals that he exists to all, as it is written in the Gospel, “no one has seen God except the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, who has revealed [him]” (Jn 1:18).

omnia enim per Verbum ejus discunt quia est unus Deus Pater, qui continet omnia et omnibus esse praestat, quemadmodum in Evangelio scriptum est: *Deum nemo vidit unquam, nisi unigenitus Filius, qui est in sinu Patris, ipse enarravit.*<sup>21</sup>

He culminates with the human experience of *visio dei*, which has often been the focus of scholarship,<sup>22</sup> but the exegesis thus far highlights that while God

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the claim that this scripture supports Irenaeus' description of divine simplicity. Grant has argued that Irenaeus' citation of Xenophanes in *haer* 2.13 and 2.28 is based on 1 Corinthians 12. Grant, “Place de Basilide dans la théologie chrétienne ancienne,” 201–206.

19 In the Septuagint, this is ὁμοιώθην.

20 *haer.* 4.20.6 (SC 100.644).

21 *haer.* 4.20.6 (SC 100.644–646).

22 Most scholars read *haer.* 4.20 and its description of *visio dei* anthropocentrically. Whether as the beatific vision (Balthasar and Daley), as deification (Andia), or as the key to Irenaeus' anthropology (Behr and Steenberg), the focus is generally on the human's increase toward God. For beatific vision, see Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, 11, 31–94; Brian Daley, *God visible: Patristic Christology Reconsidered* (Oxford: OUP, 2018), 65–83. For deification, see de Andia, *Homo Vivens*. For anthropology, see Behr, *Asceticism and anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*; Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*; Matthew Steenberg, *Of God and Man: Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 16–54. Steenberg reads Irenaeus' cosmology anthropo-



reveals himself in each event of the human experience of history, these are united when examined through the lens of divine activity (*haer.* 4.20.7). Creation and revelation together reveal the invisible God.<sup>23</sup> In order to know (Matt 11:27) and see (Jn 1:18) God, it is only through the Word and Wisdom, who are showing and presenting humans to God while still “preserving (*custodiens*) the invisibility of the Father.”<sup>24</sup>

The exegesis of *haer.* 4.20 is rooted in Book 2, but the development of his exegesis further reveals a tension in Irenaeus’ thought between unity and distinction. Creation and revelation are described as one activity. The book of Genesis is understood through Revelation. The activities of Word and Wisdom are described as one, but explained separately. While the human experience and understanding of divine activity require a separated description of this activity, Irenaeus’ argument regularly returns to language that emphasises no separation in divine activity. I suggest that this multi-layered description of unity and distinction in divine activity depends on the principle of divine simplicity, a claim that is further substantiated by his dependence on its terminology.

## 2 Terminology of Divine Simplicity in the Activity of Father, Son, and Spirit

Just as the exegetical developments in *haer.* 4.20 retain a dependence on Book 2, so too the theological tensions in the metaphor of God’s Hands retain conceptual terminology from Book 2. This is seen in his use of the containment metaphor for creation and God’s activity as “himself in/through himself.” The first is applied to divine simplicity (see Chapter 3) and the other appears in the definition of divine simplicity. He develops this terminology by describing particular roles of Father, Son, and Spirit in the unified activity of creation and revelation. These different terms highlight a tension between unity and distinction: (1) between God’s will, thought and activity for creation; (2) between creation as a single activity of *creatio ex nihilo*, *creatio*

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centrically, and rightly so, for the purpose of the beginning is the end, the purpose of Genesis is found in Revelation, and the purpose of Irenaeus’ theological system is the *visio dei*. Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 6–8, 74, 147, 214.

23 This continues to be the case in scriptural movements of *haer.* 4.20.9–10. The God who cannot be seen (Ex 34:6–7), was heard in a still, small voice in the cleft of the Rock (3 Reg 19:11–12), and then this Word and this Rock then made it possible for humanity to see God.

24 *haer.* 4.20.7 (SC 100.646–648). *hominibus quidem ostendens Deum, Deo autem exhibens hominem; et invisibilitatem quidem Patris custodiens.*

*continua*, and revelation; and, (3) between the unified activity of the distinct roles of Father, Son and Spirit. Scholars have struggled with labelling this third description of divine activity, particularly because it is interwoven with the other two. It seems important to avoid the separation found in the term “communal,” while preserving some of the distinction lost in a “single act.” I therefore return to the phrase “mutually entailing” adopted in Chapter 2 to describe this unity of God’s powers, of God’s activity, and of the roles of Father, Son, and Spirit.<sup>25</sup>

In *haer.* 4.19–20 the metaphor of the hands of God is interwoven with the metaphor of containment from Book 2 to describe God’s Word and Wisdom in creating the world and revealing the Father. God’s Hands are described as God himself creating and containing the world, and once again, God’s will and activity are described as mutually entailing. As argued in Chapter 3, the containment metaphor illustrates the concept of divine simplicity, that God’s will and activity in creation cannot be separated (*haer.* 2.1–6). In *haer.* 4.20, Irenaeus again uses the terminology of containment, and the argument remains consistent with divine simplicity. First, in *haer.* 4.19.2–3, Irenaeus refers to the Hand of God measuring the heavens (citing Isaiah 40:12) alongside the God who cannot be measured by height, depth, length, or breadth (from Ephesians 3:18, also citing Eph 1:21; Jer 23:23). In the same way, Irenaeus’ definition of divine simplicity has also ruled out the possibility of measuring or containing God. Then, Irenaeus applies the metaphor of containment to God’s Hands alongside citations from his exegesis for creation:

And it was he himself who through himself established and made and adorned and contains everything. According to us ‘in everything’ includes us and this world .... For God did not need these things [angels, distant powers, or other gods] to make what he himself had predetermined to be made, as if he did not have his own hands.<sup>26</sup> For the Word and Wisdom are always with him, Son and Spirit, through whom and in whom (cf. Eph 4:6) he made everything freely and of his own accord.

25 The phrase “communal act” and “triune act” are adopted by Steenberg in his study of Irenaeus’ exegesis of Genesis. Fantino uses the phrase “a single act” (*d’un seul agir*). Bingham focuses on Irenaeus’ usage of Ephesians 4:6, and describes the divine activity as “himself within himself.” Bingham’s usage focuses more on a “Trinitarian” description instead of divine activity in general. See Fantino, *La théologie d’Irénée*, 284; Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 64; Bingham, “Himself within Himself: The Father and His Hands in Early Christianity,” 151.

26 According to LSJ, 11.0, *manus* can be used of power.

et ipse est qui per semetipsum constituit et fecit et adornavit et continet omnia, in omnibus autem et nos<sup>27</sup> et hunc mundum qui est secundum nos ... Neque enim indigebat horum Deus ad faciendum quae ipse apud se praefinierat fieri, quasi ipse suas non haberet manus. Adest enim ei semper Verbum et Sapientia, Filius et Spiritus, per quos et in quibus omnia libere et sponte fecit.<sup>28</sup>

This argument echoes the definition of divine simplicity in Book 2, arguing for the one God who creates and contains all through something that is not separated from himself. The argument then develops the language of Book 2 by including the metaphor of God's Hands to illustrate that God creates and contains through his Word and Wisdom. This metaphor reappears in *haer.* 4.20.5, where the God who is "uncontained, incomprehensible, <and invisible>" showed himself to humans as visible, comprehensible, and contained so that he would give life to those who grasp/perceive (*percipientes*) and see him,<sup>29</sup> concluding that though God is indescribable, he is not unknown. He uses the language of containment to show that revelation is not separated from creation. Irenaeus presents the creating Word alongside the incarnate and sacrificed Word, through which humanity is contained by paternal light (*circumdatus paterno lumine*). Irenaeus again deploys the providential connotation of the metaphor of containment. God's will is united to the process of creation and revelation, since God "predetermined" creation (*praefinierat*) and God made everything "freely and of his own accord" (*omnia libere et sponte fecit*),<sup>30</sup> echoing the language from Book 2 against a creation that is bound by necessity or fate, or which is the result of a separable divine thought, will, and action. Irenaeus further develops his description of revelation by describing the distinct roles of Father, Son and Spirit, for though "Humans cannot see God and live" (Ex 33:20), God willed it.

A human by themselves will not see God, but if he wants, he will be seen by humans, by whomever he wants, and whenever he wants, and in whatever way he wants.

27 The Armenian omits *et nos*, and Hv 4.34.1 (2.213) claims that this is required to make sense of what follows, but in *haer.* 2.2.5, Irenaeus gives a similar explanation of what he means by everything, so it follows that this needs further clarification.

28 *haer.* 4.20.1 (SC 100.624–626).

29 *haer.* 4.20.5 (SC 100.640). Et propter hoc incapabilis et incomprehensibilis <et invisibilis> visibilem se et comprehensibilem et capacem hominibus praestat, ut vivificet percipientes et videntes se.

30 *haer.* 4.20.1.

Homo etenim a se non videbit<sup>31</sup> Deum; ille autem volens videbitur hominibus,<sup>32</sup> quibus vult et quando vult et quemadmodum vult.<sup>33</sup>

This was always the providential plan. In both the process of creation and in the human experience of seeing God, God's will and activity cannot be divided into parts. While *haer.* 4.20 develops a more nuanced view of revelation through God's Word and Wisdom, just as God's will and activity in creation utilised divine simplicity in Book 2, here God's will and activity are mutually entailing in creation and revelation.

His description of the activity of God's Hands as "himself with/by/in himself" also seems to depend on divine simplicity. This terminology is very distinctive in both the Latin and Greek, but because there is more of Irenaeus' text in a Latin translation, it more easily lends itself to an intra-textual comparison.<sup>34</sup> The exact phrase, "ipse a semetipso" only appears in *haer.* 2.13.4, 2.16.3, 2.30.9, and 4.20.1, first used in the context of divine simplicity. In *haer.* 2.30.9 and *haer.* 4.20.1 it is applied, not just to the powers of God generally, but specifically to the Word and Wisdom of God. This terminology describes God's will

31 *videbit ... videbitur* in Rousseau (SC100.638) following CV, *videt ... videtur* in Hv 4.34.5 (2.216) following AQSE, though ε is missing *videtur*. Based on the citation from Ex. 33:20, it seems advisable to follow CV.

32 *ab* and *a* included with the ablatives of *hominibus* and *quibus* in Hv 4.34.5 (2.216).

33 *haer.* 4.20.5 (SC 100.638).

34 According to the LLT (searching (1) "ips\* in semetips\*"; (2) "ips\* a semetips\*"; (3) "ips\* semetips\*"; (4) "ips\* per semetips\*" and (5) "semetips\* ips\*"), this formula appears in the first sense in *haer.* 2.2.4, in the second in *haer.* 2.13.4; 2.16.3; 2.30.9; and 4.20.1, in the third in *haer.* 3.25.7, 5.11.1; and 5.14.1; in the fourth in *haer.* 1.12.1; 3.6.1; 4.16.4; 4.22.1; 5.14.1; and 5.26.2 and in the fifth in *haer.* 1.15.2 and 3.15.2. In the entire database, Irenaeus' translated text is the first to use this formula. Tertullian (*Praex.* 16) is the only other example close to the second century. Otherwise, there are four examples from the fourth century (Ambrose *de of.* 2.29.151, Augustine *trin* 3.10.1, Phoebadius *adv. arianos* 28, and ps-Clement of Rome *Recognitiones* 3.16; 5.18.3 translated by Rufinus), ten examples around the fifth and sixth century, and about one hundred from the medieval era. If one allows for more complex sentences in Irenaeus, searching (%1 ips\* semetips\*), there are ninety examples. Irenaeus' Latin translation is the only text connected to a second-century writer that uses it. Tertullian has 36, but not until Augustine is there a number close to Irenaeus'. In *haer.* 1.12.2, the Greek is αὐτῇ καὶ ἑαυτῇ, and in *haer.* 1.15.2 it is ἐν ἑαυτῷ αὐτὰ, showing some variety. A search in the TLG, which uses the Harvey numbering system, resulted in *haer.* 1.1.9, 1.1.15; 1.6.1; 1.6.1a; 1.6.2; 1.8.1; 1.8.3; 1.8.13; 1.9.2; 1.9.3; 1.10.1; 1.11.2; 1.14.4; frag 9 (from 5.3–13; *p. jena*); frag 14; and frag 28. For comparable usages in Greek before Irenaeus, see Athenagoras, *leg.* 7.2; 10.3; 14.2; 16.3; 22.4; and *res.* 12.6; Theophilus of Antioch, *Autol.* 2.6, 10, 21, 27; Justin in *dial.* 4.5; Tatian in *orat.* 5.2 and 17.2. For the link between this phrase and Ephesians 4:6, see Bingham, "Himself within Himself: The Father and His Hands in Early Christianity."

and activity as simultaneous and mutually entailing in *haer.* 1.12.2 and 2.13.3–4, which, as I argued in Chapter 2 above, implies the principle of divine simplicity. In the opening of *haer.* 4.20, he uses it twice:

it was he himself who through himself established and made and adorned and contains everything ...

et ipse est qui per semetipsum constituit et fecit et adornavit et continet omnia ...<sup>35</sup>

For God did not need these things to make what he himself had pre-determined to be made, as if he did not have his own hands. For the Word and Wisdom are always with him, Son and Spirit, through whom and in whom (cf. Eph 4:6) he made everything freely and of his own accord, to whom he spoke, saying, “Let us make human(s) according to our image and likeness” (Gen 1:26), taking himself from himself the substance of creatures and the example of creation and the form of ornamentation for the world.

Neque enim indigebat horum Deus ad faciendum<sup>36</sup> quae ipse apud se praefinierat fieri, quasi ipse suas non haberet manus. Adest enim ei semper Verbum et Sapientia, Filius et Spiritus, per quos et in quibus omnia libere et sponte fecit, ad quos et loquitur, dicens: *Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram*, ipse a semetipso substantiam creaturarum et exemplum factorum et figuram in mundo ornamentorum accipiens.<sup>37</sup>

In Book 1, this terminology shows a lack of separation between God’s thought and activity, and in Book 2, between God’s powers. Here in Book 4 it is used to show a lack of separation between Father, Son, and Spirit, both in creation and revelation. The various verbs of creation (make, establish, adorn, etc.) are used to argue that God himself created, and even took the substance and form for creation from himself. This fits with Irenaeus’ view that matter is not coeternal with God, and creation did not come from a lower demiurge. As in Book 2, this phrase of God “himself in/through himself” retains absolute unity in the activity of creation.

35 *haer.* 4.20.1 (SC 100.624).

36 Should be *facienda* since a gerund should not be used transitively.

37 *haer.* 4.20.1 (SC 100.626).

Throughout *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus presents both creation and revelation as one act, done by God himself, through his Word and Wisdom, and different series of verbs are used to describe divine activity, but with this interweaving of unity and distinction. Sometimes these verbs are applied to God generally, and other times specifically to Father, Son, or Spirit. While Irenaeus is not consistent, this usage underscores the tension between describing creation as God “himself in/through himself,” and describing the work of his Hands as “himself in/through himself.” In *haer.* 2.30.9, for example, he states that the creator made, arranged, perfected, and is containing all things (*fecit, disposuit, perfecit, capiens*), but then distinguishes between the Word that founded and formed (*condens et faciens*) and the Wisdom that fitted and arranged (*aptauit et disposuit*). However, there is also a sense of a past act that carries into the present. In *haer.* 3.10.4, one should only worship the Creator who made and established (*fecerit et constituerit* in the perfect tense) and nourishes (*enutrit* in the present tense) us.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, in *haer.* 3.24.2, while God cannot be comprehended in regard to his greatness or essence, he can be known as the one who made, formed and breathed (*fecit, plasmavit, and insufflav* in the perfect tense) humanity into life and who nourishes (*nutrit* in the present tense) all things by establishing and binding (*confirmans* and *compingens* as present participles) them by his Word and Wisdom.<sup>39</sup> These verbs for creation carry a sense of time while alternating between a description of God creating and the distinct roles between God’s Word and Wisdom.

This same kind of verb series is used of God’s revelation in *haer.* 4.20.5.

A human by themselves will not see God, but if [God] wants he will be seen by humans, by whomever he wants, and whenever he wants, and in whatever way he wants. For God is able to do everything, at one time being seen prophetically through the Spirit, and then being seen adoptively through the Son, and will be seen Paternally in the kingdom of heaven, with the Spirit preparing humans in the Son of God, with the Son leading to the Father, and with the Father giving incorruption with eternal life, which only comes to those who see God. For in the same way they are seeing light within light they are perceiving his brightness. Thus, they are seeing God within God, and perceiving his brightness. The brightness of God gives them life, therefore those who see God are grasping life. And for this [reason] the uncontained, incomprehensible, <and invisible>

38 *haer.* 3.10.4 (SC 211.130).

39 *haer.* 3.24.2 (SC 211.476).

showed himself to humans as visible, comprehensible, and contained, in order to give life to those who perceive and see him.

Homo etenim a se non videbit Deum; ille autem volens videbitur hominibus, quibus vult et quando vult et quemadmodum vult: potens est enim in omnibus Deus, visus quidem tunc per Spiritum propheticę, visus autem et per Filium adoptive, videbitur autem et in regno caelorum paternalliter, Spiritu quidem pręparante hominem in Filium Dei, Filio autem adducente ad Patrem, Patre autem incorruptelam donante in aeternam vitam, quae unicuique evenit ex eo quod videat Deum. \*Quemadmodum enim videntes lumen intra lumen sunt et claritatem ejus percipiunt, sic et qui vident Deum intra Deum sunt, percipientes ejus claritatem. Vivificat autem Dei claritas: percipiunt ergo vitam qui vident Deum. Et propter hoc incapabilis et incomprehensibilis <et invisibilis> visibilem se et comprehensibilem et capacem hominibus praestat, ut vivificet percipientes et videntes se.

“Ὡςπερ οἱ βλέποντες τὸ φῶς ἐντός εἰσι τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ τῆς λαμπρότητος αὐτοῦ μετέχουσιν, οὕτως οἱ βλέποντες τὸν Θεὸν ἐντός εἰσι<sup>40</sup> τοῦ Θεοῦ, μετέχοντες αὐτοῦ τῆς λαμπρότητος· ζωῆς οὖν μετέξουσιν οἱ ὁρώντες Θεόν. Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ὁ ἀχώρητος καὶ ἀκατάληπτος καὶ ἀόρατος ὁρώμενον ἑαυτὸν καὶ καταλαμβάνόμενον καὶ χωρούμενον τοῖς πιστοῖς παρέσχεν, ἵνα ζωοποιήσῃ τοὺς χωροῦντας καὶ βλέποντας αὐτὸν διὰ πίστεως.<sup>41</sup>

Irenaeus builds upon the argument from *haer.* 2.30.9, where the Son was shown revealing the Father to the Angels from the beginning. Now, just as God's will resulted in the creation of the world, through the Word and by the Spirit, so too God desired to be seen, which occurs through the Spirit revealing through the prophets, the Son in the Incarnation, and the Father in paternal glory. Will and act are not separated in either creation or revelation, despite distinction between Father, Son and Spirit. This was always the providential plan. Each stage in the experience of a person seeing God (Spirit preparing ... Son leading ... and Father giving) is bound to the activity of Father, Son, and Spirit, and the human experience of seeing God includes a distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit. Irenaeus supports this statement through extended exegesis, high-

40 εἰσι in Halloix replaced with γίνονται in Gesner. Gesner does predate Halloix by 100 years, but both Rousseau (SC 100.640–641) and Hv (2.216) give preference to Halloix.

41 *haer.* 4.20.5 (SC 100.638–642).

lighting God's promise that humanity would see God (Deut 5:24) and shows that while some saw God prophetically through the Spirit (cf. Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17), others saw God through the coming and ministry of the Son (cf. Lk 10:21), and others saw God through the paternal glory (which seems to be referring to the Mount of Transfiguration, cf. 2 Pt. 1:16–21). These roles are seen throughout scripture. He follows this exegesis by stating:

Therefore, God was manifested: this God, the Father is revealed through everything, with the Spirit indeed working, with the Son actually ministering, with the Father actually approving, and with humankind actually being completed to salvation.

Sic igitur manifestabatur Deus: per omnia enim haec Deus Pater ostenditur, Spiritu quidem operante, Filio vero administrante, Patre vero comprobante, homine vero consummato ad salutem.<sup>42</sup>

Irenaeus describes the distinct roles of the Father, Son and Spirit in the work of revelation. He also distinguishes stages of history, individual experiences, and particular events within history.

Behr has noted this layering of history and calls it the “synchronic and diachronic harmony of scripture,” and he also links it to divine simplicity, where the activity of the simple God is described both at historical points and throughout (and outside of) history.<sup>43</sup> Distinction and unity are overlaid. This analysis aligns closely with my argument to this point, and the emphasis on time highlights yet another point at which Irenaeus alludes to philosophical questions of his own time.<sup>44</sup> This temporal lens overlays *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio continua*, a sense that can also be seen in the Hand of God in Book 5. In *haer.* 5.16.1, while describing Jesus's healing of the blind man in John 9, Irenaeus writes that the same hand that healed the man was the hand that, from beginning to end, forms, prepares, is present with, and perfects (*format, coaptat,*

42 *haer.* 4.20.6 (SC 100.644).

43 Behr, “Synchronic and Diachronic Harmony: St. Irenaeus on Divine Simplicity.”

44 This temporal language differentiates creator and creature, which Irenaeus regularly does, and while in *haer.* 2.28 Irenaeus refuses to engage questions of what God was doing before creation, by the time one arrives at *haer.* 4.38, he describes God as eternal, but humanity's ascent as sempiternal (Irenaeus' translator reads τὴν εἰς ἀεὶ παραμονὴν as *sempiternam perseverationem*): *haer.* 4.38.3 (SC 100.952). For a good summary of the philosophical discussion at and after the time of Irenaeus, particularly those that examine creation through questions of time and divine will, see Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators 200–600 AD*, 175–185.



*adest*, and *perficit*) humanity.<sup>45</sup> Throughout *Against Heresies*, God's activity is simultaneously diachronic, in that it has different implications in time for humans, and synchronic, in that it is a single activity for a simple God. Behr's terminology is helpful, both revealing the tension between unity and distinction in divine activity, and demonstrating the problem with human language when trying to describe divine activity itself. Irenaeus must speak of God's activity separately, in terms of time or through scriptural names and powers as revealed to humanity through time and language. As stated later in *haer.* 4.20, "[The Father] is not seen in one figure nor in one character by those who see him but according to the causes or efficacy of his economy."<sup>46</sup> However, Irenaeus opposes the separation that results from temporal or linguistic difference without denying distinction, and he regularly returns to language that unifies distinct roles of planning, creating and perfecting of Father, Son, and Spirit. In the metaphor of the hands of God, divine activity is not divided into parts, for God is simple, but the roles between Father, Son, and Spirit are distinguished.

### 3 Two Potential Challenges to This Reading of *Haer.* 4.20

My reading of *haer.* 4.20 and my claim that it uses the principle of simplicity should be tested against two readings in recent scholarship. First, Michael Slusser's argument bifurcates Irenaeus' description of God's greatness and love, such that the former describes God's transcendence and the latter God's immanence, a reading that suggests parts in God. If this is the case, then my claim about the regulatory function of the concept of divine simplicity comes into question. Second, I will qualify a common scholarly claim, recently reiterated by Anthony Briggman, that Irenaeus adopted Theophilus of Antioch's hands of God metaphor, by arguing that Irenaeus' development of Theophilus' metaphor points to the regulatory function of his concept of divine simplicity.

#### 3.1 *God's Mutually Entailing Love and Greatness*

Michael Slusser explores each time Irenaeus states that God "cannot be measured" and is "distant" because of his greatness, but God can be "known" and "felt as close" because of his love.<sup>47</sup> While I am sympathetic to his claim that

45 *haer.* 5.16.1 (SC 153.212–214). A. Rousseau, L. Doutreleau, and C. Mercier, eds., *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies, Livre V*, SC 153 (Paris: du Cerf, 1969).

46 *haer.* 4.20.11. Translation from Moringiello, *The Rhetoric of Faith*, 125.

47 Slusser, "The Heart of Irenaeus's Theology."

the concept of a knowable God and love of God (and for God) are central to Irenaeus' theology, his reading seems to understand God's greatness as transcendent and God's love as immanent.

This phrasing first appears in Irenaeus' retelling of the Valentinian creation story, where the Sophia's desire (*dilectionem*) to know the first cause resulted in a corrupt creation.<sup>48</sup> Irenaeus first uses it in his own theological system in *haer.* 2.13.4, after describing God as simple and all mind, all spirit, all understanding, etc.

He is both beyond these [*sensus, spiritus, sensuabilitas, ennoia, lumen*, etc.] and nearly indescribable. It is right and good to call him "thought" who contains all things, but not like the thinking of a human. It is most right to call him "light," but in no way similar to what is light according to us. Thus, in all that remains, there will be nothing similar between the Father of all and the smallness of humans. He is called proximate because of love, but he is sensed as being distant because of his greatness.

Est autem et super haec, et propter hoc inenarrabilis. Sensus enim capax omnium bene ac recte dicitur, sed non similis hominum sensui; et lumen rectissime dicitur, sed nihil simile ei quod est secundum nos lumini. Sic autem et in reliquis omnibus nulli similis erit omnium Pater hominum pusillitati: et dicitur quidem secundum haec propter dilectionem, sentitur autem super haec secundum magnitudinem.<sup>49</sup>

While denying a description of God that separates him from creation and asserting that God is simple and without parts, Irenaeus places limits on the way scriptural terms like "word" and "light" can describe God, such that, in whatever way they are used, they must not refer to parts (see Chapter 2, section 2). Later, in *haer.* 2.17, he describes the generation of God's power, claiming that God would want to be known by these generated powers, so that, if the Father was not known because of his greatness (*immensam magnitudinem*) then because of his love (*immensam dilectionem*) they would know the Father, or they would at least know of Him and that He was without limit and incomprehensible.<sup>50</sup> Again in *haer.* 3.24.2–3, God comes within the reach of human knowledge because of his love and immense kindness (*propter dilectionem*

48 *haer.* 1.2.2 (SC 264.38–40).

49 *haer.* 2.13.4 (SC 294.116).

50 *haer.* 2.17.11 (SC 294.174).

*suam et immensam benignitatem*), but not according to his greatness or substance (*non secundum magnitudinem nec secundum substantiam*), although humans can know that he creates and sustains through his Word and Wisdom.<sup>51</sup>

This phrasing appears one last time in the context of the metaphor of the hands of God (*haer.* 4.19–20), and it calls into question the seeming bifurcation between God's greatness and love. First, Irenaeus describes the incomprehensible and invisible as comprehensible and revealed, and second, he claims that God's goodness, a description that could be linked with God's immanence, is as incomprehensible as God's greatness. Starting in *haer.* 4.19.2, Irenaeus acknowledges that God cannot be measured in the heart or comprehended in the mind, so if someone thinks correctly about God (*digne Deo sapit*), that person cannot fully declare his greatness (*magnitudinem*) from creation.

Therefore, God is not to be comprehended according to his greatness [for] it is impossible to measure the Father, [rather] he leads us to God through his Word according to his love, [which is how] they learn to always listen to him since he is so great a God.

Igitur secundum magnitudinem non est cognoscere Deum: impossibile est enim mensurari Patrem; secundum autem dilectionem ejus—haec est enim quae nos per Verbum ejus perducit ad Deum—obaudientes ei semper discunt quoniam est tantus Deus.<sup>52</sup>

In this first example, there is a tension between what is normally impossible, yet made possible through the Word. Despite human incapacity to measure God in the heart, the Father is measured in the Son. Previously he stated that the Son is the measure of the Father (*haer.* 4.4.2) and later in this passage he will state that the Son makes the incomprehensible, comprehensible (*haer.* 4.20.5). Aspects of the transcendence of the Father are made proximate through the Son. After exegesis on God's Word (*haer.* 4.20.2) and Wisdom (*haer.* 4.20.3), Irenaeus returns to the language of greatness and love:

Therefore, there is one God who by his Word and Wisdom made and adjusted everything. This is the creator, who gave the world for the race

51 *haer.* 3.24.11 (SC 211.476) qui fecit et plasmauit et insufflationem uitae insufflauit in eis et per conditionem nutrit nos, Verbo suo confirmans et Sapientia compingens omnia. In the ensuing section, Irenaeus refers to the goodness of the demiurge from Plato's *Timaeus*.

52 *haer.* 4.20.1 (SC 100.624).

of humans, who according to his greatness is unknown by all that was made by him—no one understood his greatness neither the ancients nor those who live today—but according to his love he can always be known through him through whom everything was founded. This is his Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, who in the most recent age of humanity was made human, so that he could join together the end with the beginning, that is humanity with God.

Unus igitur Deus, qui Verbo et Sapientia fecit et aptavit omnia. Hic est autem Demiurgus, qui et mundum hunc attribuit humano generi, qui secundum magnitudinem quidem ignotus est omnibus his qui ab eo facti sunt—nemo enim investigavit altitudinem ejus, neque veterum neque eorum qui nunc sunt—, secundum autem dilectionem cognoscitur semper per eum per quem constituit omnia. \*Est autem hic Verbum ejus, Dominus noster Jesus Christus, qui in novissimis temporibus homo in hominibus factus est, ut finem conjungeret principio, hoc est hominem Deo.

Ἦστι δὲ οὗτος ὁ Λόγος αὐτοῦ ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, ὁ ἐν ἐσχάτοις καιροῖς Θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις γενόμενος, ἵνα τὸ τέλος συνάψῃ τῇ ἀρχῇ, τουτέστιν ἄνθρωπον Θεῷ.<sup>53</sup>

Because the incarnation was foretold by the prophets, by focusing on language of walking with God and seeing God, both Son and Spirit are described as involved in making God known and visible to humanity from the beginning. Irenaeus transitions from the impossible to the possible by weaving together three passages about seeing God (“no one will see God and live” from Exodus 33:20, but “Blessed are the clean in heart, for they will see God” from Matthew 5:8, because “those things which are impossible for humans are possible with God” from Luke 18:27), and he argues that the original meaning (*praesignificatio*) of this prophecy was always that the invisible Father would be seen by humans. Though it seemed impossible, it was always part of God’s purpose that the Father be made proximate through the Son.

According to his greatness and indescribable glory, “no one will see God and live” (Ex 33:20), for the Father is beyond comprehension, but indeed according to his love and philanthropy he can do everything, and it is

53 *haer.* 4.20.4 (SC 100.634).

granted for those who love him to see God, as the prophets prophesied, that “those things which are impossible for humans are possible with God” (Lk 18:27) ...

And because of this he shows the uncontained, incomprehensible, <and invisible> in himself visible, comprehensible, and contained to the faithful,<sup>54</sup> to give life to those who submit and who see him through faith.<sup>55</sup> In whatever way his greatness is unsearchable,<sup>56</sup> his goodness is indescribable, through which once he is seen he gives life to those who see him, since it is impossible to live without life, and the substance of life comes from sharing God, and sharing God is to see God and to enjoy his goodness.

Sed secundum magnitudinem quidem ejus et inenarrabilem gloriam *nemo videbit Deum et vivet*, incapabilis enim Pater, secundum autem dilectionem et humanitatem et quod omnia possit, etiam hoc concedit his qui se diligunt, id est videre Deum, quod et prophetabant prophetae: *quoniam quae impossibilia sunt apud homines possibilia apud Deum ...*

\*Et propter hoc incapabilis et incomprehensibilis <et invisibilis> visibilem se et comprehensibilem et capacem hominibus praestat, ut vivificet percipientes et videntes se. Quemadmodum enim magnitudo ejus investigabilis, sic et benignitas ejus inenarrabilis, per quam visus vitam praestat his qui vident eum: quoniam vivere sine vita impossibile est, subsistentia autem vitae de Dei participatione evenit, participatio autem Dei est videre Deum et frui benignitate ejus.\*

Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ὁ ἀχώρητος καὶ ἀκατάληπτος καὶ ἀόρατος ὁρῶμενον ἑαυτὸν καὶ καταλαμβάνομενον καὶ χωρούμενον τοῖς πιστοῖς παρέσχεν, ἵνα ζωοποιήσῃ τοὺς χωροῦντας καὶ βλέποντας αὐτὸν διὰ πίστεως. Ὡς γὰρ τὸ μέγεθος αὐτοῦ ἀνεξιχνίαστον, οὕτως καὶ ἡ ἀγαθότης αὐτοῦ ἀνεξίγητος, δι' ἧς βλέπομενος ζωὴν ἐνδίδωσι τοῖς ὁρώσιν αὐτόν. Ἐπεὶ ζῆσαι ἄνευ ζωῆς οὐχ οἷόν τε ἦν, ἡ δὲ ὕπαρ-

54 The Latin has “to humans.”

55 “Through faith” is absent in the Latin.

56 According to LS, *investigabilis* can mean either searchable or unsearchable. My argument would be strengthened if it meant “searchable,” but the Greek and Armenian make this unlikely. The Greek uses ἀνεξιχνίαστον. Both Rousseau and Harvey simply mark the Armenian as following the Latin with the inclusion of “est,” and according to Reynders, the Armenian word is ւարձաւի, which translated means “inscrutable.” Reynders, *Lexique comparé*, 2.168; Harvey, *Santi Irenaei episcopi Lugdunensis libros quinque adversus haereses*, 270, n. 4; Rousseau, SC 100, 640.

ξίς τῆς ζωῆς ἐκ τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ περιγίνεται μετοχῆς, μετοχή<sup>57</sup> δὲ Θεοῦ ἐστὶ τὸ γινώσκειν Θεὸν καὶ ἀπολαύειν τῆς χρηστότητος αὐτοῦ.<sup>58</sup>

Michael Slusser does not explore this second half of *haer.* 4.20.5. In it, both God's greatness and goodness are described as beyond human comprehension and expression. Based on his "transcendence versus immanence" lens, here both God's greatness and goodness are being described in terms of God's transcendence, which would, in turn, contrast God's love against God's goodness.

In this passage, transcendence and immanence are interwoven. The impossible is made possible. The incomprehensible and uncontained God is comprehensible and contained in Christ. Though God is invisible, God willed for himself to be seen. Through the lens of the principle of divine simplicity, God is not concealed in his greatness and revealed in his love, but rather, love, goodness, and greatness are both revealed and indescribable because humans and their experiences are insufficient.<sup>59</sup> This sense of tension can be supported in Irenaeus' description of the revealing work of the Word:

Therefore, the Word is made the dispenser of paternal grace for the usefulness of humanity, he made so many arrangements for them, indeed showing God to humans, presenting humans to God, thus preserving the invisibility of the Father.

Et propterea Verbum dispensator paternae gratiae factus est ad utilitatem hominum, propter quos fecit tantas dispositiones, hominibus quidem ostendens Deum, Deo autem exhibens hominem; et invisibilitatem quidem Patris custodiens.<sup>60</sup>

The Word both reveals the Father and preserves his invisibility. Likewise, the tension between God's transcendence and God's immanence should not be separated into God's greatness and love. Any separation between these two should be attributed to the difference between God and his creation, reflecting human incapacity, rather than parts in God. Orbe's conclusion, though dated,

57 The verb and noun translation of μετέχω and μετοχή are translated as *percipio* and *participationem* respectively. For discussion of these terms as they relate the question of knowledge versus opinion, particularly in Plutarch, see Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 256.

58 *haer.* 4.20.5 (SC 100.638–642).

59 Irenaeus later claims that God's power, wisdom, goodness, and kindness are mutually entailing in creation (*haer.* 4.38.3). See discussion in Chapter 6 section 2.2.

60 *haer.* 4.20.7 (SC 100.646–648).

sums it up: God's economy "according to love" calls humanity to knowledge of God through the revealed divine perfections made known through the Son, and those who see God are called to know God "according to his greatness."<sup>61</sup> God's love and greatness entail one another, and in the human process of knowing God, they are both revealing and beyond comprehension.

### 3.2 *God Creating Without Instruments*

It has been rightly noted that Irenaeus shares many theological propensities with Theophilus of Antioch, and the hands of God metaphor is one of the most distinctive features that they share.<sup>62</sup> Briggman claims that *haer.* 3.8.3 is the first place where a clear knowledge of Theophilus's *ad Autolyicum* can be demonstrated, but that Book 4 in particular demonstrates Irenaeus' dependence on Theophilus—where the hands of God metaphor is clearly attributed to both the Word and Wisdom as Son and Spirit.<sup>63</sup> I have suggested that the theological parts of the hands of God metaphor which come together in *haer.* 4.20 were already present in *haer.* 2.30.9, and starting in Book 2, Irenaeus differentiates himself from certain descriptions of God's Word and Wisdom as used by Theophilus.

Irenaeus does not describe the "Hands of God" as God's Word and Wisdom until Book 4, or the "Hand of God" as God's Word prior to *haer.* 3.21.10, so Briggman has argued that one cannot definitively assert that the hands of God metaphor was present before Book 4, and certainly not before Book 3.<sup>64</sup> However, in my estimation, Briggman's differentiation between the singular hand and plural hands of God seems too strong, as both Theophilus and Irenaeus regularly refer to both. Theophilus refers to the Hand of God four times in the singular, and only twice in the plural. *Ad Autolyicum* 2.18 is the most famous, and only, example where Theophilus of Antioch refers to the hands of God as his *Logos* and *Sophia*, which is certainly significant, but he also cites Psalm 94[95]:4 to describe the hand of God (*Autol.* 1.4). He twice speaks of the hand

61 Orbe, "San Ireneo y el conocimiento natural de Dios, Parte II," 735–747, especially 38–39.

62 Loof's work applied source criticism to his work and attempted to reconstruct a lost work of Theophilus. He claims that Irenaeus cited the work literally without acknowledging it, which in the end leaves little original in Irenaeus. His conclusions were quickly challenged, though they continue to shape modern scholarship. Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochen Adversus Marcionem und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenaeus*; Hitchcock, "Loof's Theory of Theophilus of Antioch as a Source of Irenaeus Part 1.," Hitchcock, "Loof's Theory of Theophilus of Antioch as a Source of Irenaeus Part 2."

63 Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit*, see ch. 5.

64 Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit*, see excursus, pp. 97–103.

of God enclosing creation (in *Autol.* 1.5), and he cites both Hosea 13:4 and Isaiah 45:12, the first which refers to the hands of God displaying the heavens, while the second shows that the heavens were made firm by the hand of God (*Autol.* 2.35).

Although Irenaeus does not describe God's Word and Wisdom as the hands of God in Book 2, this is not a conclusive way to establish a dependence on Theophilus starting after Book 3 or Book 4. Back in *haer.* 2.30, in the context of an argument for creation, Irenaeus describes the God who created and "holds the world in his hand" (citing Is 40:22 in *haer.* 2.30.1), which is the same verse used by Theophilus to argue for the way God created through his *logos* (*Autol.* 2.13). As part of the same argument, Irenaeus illustrates God as the creator with language that includes the hands of the *artifex* (*haer.* 2.30.5), and then he describes God creating through the Word of his Power and his Wisdom. There is not sufficient evidence to prove definitively that Irenaeus was influenced by Theophilus before Book 3, nor is the evidence strong enough to rule out his influence in Book 2.

In Book 2, these same sections reject the language of "tool" or "instrument" to describe divine activity, an emphasis repeated in the descriptions of God's activity through His Hands in *haer.* 4.20.<sup>65</sup> First, in *haer.* 2.2.3–5, through the metaphor of the king/architect/craftsman, Irenaeus argues that the first cause was responsible for planning each outcome, and with the craftsman in particular, the tool/demiurge cannot be blamed for what is made. After the illustration, Irenaeus insists that God did not need angels or tools (*organum*;  $\kappa\eta\eta\theta\text{-}\eta$ ) to create, but based on scripture (appealing to Jn 1:3; Ps 32[33]:9; Gen 1, and Eph 4:6), he argues using the same three terminological markers highlighted above. (1) God "himself with himself" (*ipse in semetipso*) created; and (2) he contains all; (3) just as he willed through his Word. The Word, through which God created, cannot be described as a tool. Second, this rejection of tools or instruments continues in *haer.* 2.28.4, in an argument about the generation of the *logos*. Irenaeus argues against a divided *logos* where one remains within while the other is emitted (the first as the principle of thought and the other as the instrument [*organum*] of expression), which he claims the Valentinians got from Greek philosophical thought.<sup>66</sup> Instead of dividing God like a human, with divisions

65 Antonio Orbe claims that, for Irenaeus, the Father created through his instrument, the *logos*, but I think he misunderstands Irenaeus on this point. For examples, see Antonio Orbe, "S. Ireneo y la Creación de la Materia," *Gregorianum* 59, 1 (1978); Orbe, *Teología de San Ireneo*, 275, n. 7; and 81.

66 For an argument that this is describing  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\theta\epsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$  and  $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma\ \pi\acute{\rho}\omicron\phi\omicron\rho\omicron\iota\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$ , see Rousseau and Doutreleau, *sc* 293, 320–321. See *haer.* 2.15.5 for another possible reference to  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\theta\epsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$  and  $\pi\acute{\rho}\omicron\phi\omicron\rho\omicron\iota\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$ . Rousseau believes that the distinction between these two types of



and affections, God should be understood as “all Mind, all Thought, all active Spirit, all Light, and always existing one and the same,” the same phrasing used for divine simplicity (in *haer.* 2.13).<sup>67</sup> Third, in *haer.* 2.30.5 he illustrates that, in the system of his opponents, the demiurge should be honoured more than the Father. He uses a metaphor of an artist with two tools or instruments (*ferramenta ... vel organa*), arguing that the unused tool should not be honoured more than the tool which was continually in the artist’s hands. The inactive Pleroma should not be honoured more than the actual creator. However, when outlining his own position, rather using the language of a tool, Irenaeus argues that God created according to his will, with the Father founding and forming (*condens et faciens*) by the Word of his power (*Verbo virtutis suae* citing Heb 1:3) and everything was fitted and arranged by his Wisdom (*omnia aptavit et disposuit Sapientia sua*).<sup>68</sup> This one God, who created through his Word and Wisdom, was not separated from his Word, that is his Son (*Verbum suum, qui est Filius eius*), for his Son was eternally coexisting with the Father (*semper autem coexistens Filius Patri*).<sup>69</sup> Thus, before *haer.* 4.20, Irenaeus has repeatedly rejected the language of God’s Word as a tool or instrument.<sup>70</sup> There is no separation

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λόγος make this passage incomprehensible, but he also argues that “*pricipale*” here should be understood as “τὸ ἡγεμονικόν” as it is in *haer.* 2.13.1.

67 *haer.* 2.28.5 (SC 294.280).

68 *haer.* 2.30.9 (294.318–320).

69 *haer.* 2.30.9 (SC 294.320–322).

70 He only uses this language to describe the prophets. In *haer.* 2.33.4–5, after disagreeing with Plato’s view of the soul, he calls the body the instrument of the soul. He shows discontinuity (of time and purpose) between the artist’s mental conception and what is actually drawn/painted/sculpted, showing that the instrument is slow and imperfect, precisely the kind of artistic metaphor he was arguing against when speaking about God. In *haer.* 4.11.2, humans are described as the instrument of God’s glory, in a passage that maintains the difference between creator and creature. Apart from *haer.* 4.34.4 (where exegesis of Isaiah 2 and Malachi 4 results in instruments of peace when swords become ploughshares), the only other instance is in *haer.* 5.26.2, where the Gnostics are described as agents/instruments of Satan. In *Dem.* 11, Irenaeus calls angels “underservants”. This section is problematic, and some have argued for an association of the Word and Wisdom with the Cherubim and Seraphim (*Dem.* 10), but generally, scholars have rejected this proposal. For a full discussion, see Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity*, 205, n. 55; Anthony Briggman, “Re-evaluating Angelomorphism in Irenaeus: The case of *Proof* 10,” *JTS* 61, no. 2 (2010). Since, according to Reynders, *organis* and *instrumentum* share a common Armenian root (զործ-ի), it is worth mentioning that in the famous Rule of Faith passage of *haer.* 1.10.3, Irenaeus pairs *instrumentum* (πράγματεῖαν; ζρηδ) with God’s economy (*dispositionem*; οἰκονομίαν), linking both to creation and salvation. Like its usage in Athenagoras and Theophilus of Antioch (see *leg.* 7.3, 16.3 and *Autol.* 2.9), in *haer.* 4.35.1 Irenaeus uses *instrumentum* to describe God speaking through scripture. See Reynders, *Lexique comparé*, 2:164, 223; 1:127.

between God's will and activity, there is not a chronological hierarchy between the Father and Son, and he does not use the language of instruments to describe the roles of Word and Wisdom.

However, to say that God created "through" or "by" His Hands requires clarification.<sup>71</sup> When Philo explains the way God created through his *logos*, he argues that God "made use" (προσchróμαι) of the *logos* as a tool (ὄργανον).<sup>72</sup> Elsewhere, alongside a metaphor of a craftsman building a city or house, he differentiates between God as first cause and his instruments (ὄργανον), specifically naming the Word of God as the instrument of creation (ὄργανον δὲ λόγον θεοῦ δι' οὗ κατεσκευάσθη).<sup>73</sup> This terminology of the *logos* as an instrument of God is picked up in some Christian texts, such as Clement of Alexandria.<sup>74</sup> Theophilus is closer to Irenaeus' position, for he only describes the prophets as the instruments of God, but he described the generated *logos* as an assistant (ὑπουργόν) of the God that created all things.<sup>75</sup> I agree with Richard Norris, who argues that this description is not compatible with Irenaeus' account, for these descriptions from Philo and Theophilus have more in common with Irenaeus' opponents than Irenaeus.<sup>76</sup> While Theophilus was able to use the language of

71 Fantino has argued that Irenaeus' usage of Ephesians 4:6 attributes certain prepositions to Father, Word, and probably Spirit. Fantino, *La théologie d'Irénée*, 298–299. The "metaphysics of prepositions" was already firmly established in Middle Platonist thought. See Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, 137–138.

72 Philo used the "metaphysics of prepositions" as seen in *Prov.* 1.23 and *Cher.* 125ff. Citations from Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, 138. See *Leg.* 3.96 (LCL 226.364). σκια θεοῦ δὲ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ ἐστίν, ᾧ καθάπερ ὄργανῳ προσχρησάμενος ἐκσμοποιεῖ.

73 *Cher.* 125–127 (LCL 227.82–85). Translation from F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker, eds., *Philo: On the Cherubim. The Sacrifices of Abel and Cain. The Worse Attacks the Better. On the Posterity and Exile of Cain. On the Giants*, LCL 227 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929).

74 For an example, see *Protrepticus*, 1.5–6. This description of the *logos* as an instrument can also be found in the Greek of the *Corpus Hermetica* 9.6 and in the Latin of Asclepius. See Copenhagen, *Hermetica*, 28, 76.

75 *Autol.* 2.9–10. R.M. Grant, ed., *Theophilus of Antioch ad Autolychem: Text and Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 38–41. Athenagoras also only refers to the prophets as instruments, though he does speak of creation (*leg.* 7.3 and 16.3). Justin only uses ὄργανον in reference to musical instruments and actual human tools (*dial.* 22, 110).

76 "The notion, then, that God made use of an intermediary or intermediaries in the act of creation was not confined to Irenaeus' 'heretics.' Theophilus of Antioch, for example, who was a favourite of Irenaeus, asserted that God had the Logos as his 'assistant' or 'under-worker' (ὑπουργός) in creation; and Philo had referred to the divine Logos as God's 'instrument' (τό δι' οὗ) in creation, God himself being 'cause' (αἷτιον)." See Norris, "Who Is the Demiurge?," 31. Elsewhere, he states, "the divine 'hands' is here set over against the image of 'instruments': what God's hands do, God does, without extraneous instruments. Irenaeus, then, would have been worried by Theophilus' portrayal of God's Logos

assistant alongside the language of hands, Irenaeus' language is much more intimate, rejecting the language of both tools and intermediaries.<sup>77</sup> In *haer.* 4.20.1, rather than creation through angels, other gods, or distant powers, God creates through his Hands, in a description of divine activity that rejects parts. Because Irenaeus' argument rejects the language of "ὑπουργόν" and "ἔργανον," in this case, Irenaeus adjusted, rather than simply adopted, the language of Theophilus in a way that is consistent with his concept of divine simplicity.

#### 4 Conclusion

Scriptural exegesis and theological terminology from Book 2 are used in *haer.* 4.19–20 to describe divine activity in a way that is compatible with divine simplicity. The books of Genesis and Revelation are read together, the activity of creation and revelation are described together, and distinct roles of Father, Son, and Spirit are described through the theological terminology of a God who is "containing, not contained" and of hands that are "himself in/through himself," rather than as separable powers. Though divine activity is temporally separated within the human experience or descriptions of history, it is not separated in God. Though descriptions of divine activity require different scriptural terms to describe the distinct work and roles (so there is at least analytic distinction in divine unity), again, they are not separate. Though separated temporally and linguistically for humans, for Irenaeus, this activity is not to be ontologically separated. Even beyond *haer.* 4.20, Book 4 is rooted in the definition of divine simplicity of Book 2, where Irenaeus had described God "himself in himself" creating and revealing because God is "himself equal and similar to himself" and "all light, all mind, all substance, and the source of all good."<sup>78</sup>

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as an 'assistant' or 'under-worker,' even though he takes from Theophilus the distinction between Logos and Wisdom and then, more or less on his own book, identifies these two as Son and Spirit respectively. For Irenaeus, it seems, Logos and Spirit are not to be too casually differentiated from God. Otherwise his emphasis on the intimacy of the transcendent God's relation to the created order could not be sustained." Norris, "Who Is the Demiurge?," 35. In *haer.* 4.38.3, Irenaeus once describes the Son serving (ὑπουργοῦντος), but the context does not support a view that allows for any hierarchical difference between the Father and Son.

77 This intimacy is noted by Lawson. "'The two hands of God' is an expression of the immediacy of creation, not of its mediacy." Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus*, 125.

78 See *haer.* 4.11.2 (SC 100.500). Et Deus quidem perfectus in omnibus, ipse sibi aequalis et similis, totus cum sit lumen et totus mens et totus substantia et fons omnium bonorum.

Because the argument of *haer.* 4.20 is rooted in the exegesis and theological terminology from Book 2 that depends on the principle of divine simplicity (see Chapter 1), and because the argument does not contradict this principle, but rather develops it in ways that further emphasise absolute unity of God despite the constraints of temporal and experiential language, I argue that the metaphor of the hands of God should be read through the lens of divine simplicity.

## Divine Powers and Divine Titles

In this chapter I return to Irenaeus' claim (highlighted in Chapter 2, section 2.2), that because God is simple, the many scriptural names and powers of God are "heard together" (*coobaudiuntur*), that is, they are mutually entailing. Irenaeus deploys this way of speaking about God's names and powers throughout *Against Heresies*, particularly when describing God's power in creation or the scriptural names of the Father and Son. This chapter has three sections: the first examines God's powers and names together, and the second and third focus on God's powers and names separately. In the first section, I argue that Irenaeus employs this way of speaking about God's names and powers in exegesis of the Septuagint. The scriptural names of God do not describe a God composed of separate divine powers, but in accordance with the concept of divine simplicity, they entail "one and the same" God, the creator. In the second section I focus on the ways Irenaeus describes God's power in creation. In some arguments, the emphasis is temporal, and God's power simultaneously fulfills God's will. In others, God's power is expressed through the Son and Spirit, and God's will is fulfilled, not by separated power, but by His Word and Wisdom. In still others, power is described alongside God's other attributes, so God's power, wisdom, and goodness are "seen together." For Irenaeus, God's power entails God will, God's Hands, God's wisdom, and God's goodness—claims which should be understood as guided by the concept of divine simplicity. Finally, I focus on God's names and titles. For Irenaeus, the God who creates in the Septuagint is not different from the God who reveals himself in the Gospels. I argue that, in accordance with the concept of divine simplicity, these scriptural names and titles entail both the Father and Son.

### 1 Powers, Names, and Titles of "One and the Same" God in *Haer.* 2:35:3–4

For Irenaeus, the many names of God that may be found in the Septuagint do not identify a God whose substance is composed of separate powers or gods (since God is not composite), but these names entail "one and the same" God (since God is simple). It is likely that in this argument Irenaeus is opposing non-Valentinian views of God, such as those of Basilides (*haer.* 2.35.1), but scholars

have noted that this section of the argument opposes a view of divine plurality that depends on the many names of God in the LXX, so this language of God as “one and the same” could be opposing others, such as Marcion.<sup>1</sup> Irenaeus has already stated that because God is simple (2.13.3), God’s names and powers are mutually entailing (2.13.8–9). His reference to God’s names, powers, and substance in *haer.* 2.35 is very brief, but his argument is consistent with divine simplicity. God’s names cannot entail separate powers or a composite substance in God. At different moments, his argument engages different streams of thought. Irenaeus’ argument regarding God’s names parallels the Jewish midrash,<sup>2</sup> and his association of God’s power with God’s names and substance is comparable to later Christian appropriations of Plato.<sup>3</sup> Once again, his exploration of God’s names and powers took part of a wider conversation.

Irenaeus argues that the many names of God in the Septuagint are not evidence of a God whose substance (*substantiam*) is composed of various powers (*virtutibus*) or gods (*haer.* 2.35.4). Instead, there is one and the same (*unum eundemque*) God; these are the titles of one and the same (*unius et ipsius*) God; and all things are from one and the same (*ex uno et eodem*) Father. Though the names of God have distinct meanings, they entail “one and the same” God. As he puts it:

But if indeed they would lay out the different words given in scripture, such as *Sabaoth* and *Eloae* and *Adonae* and others like these according to the Hebrew language, endeavouring to argue from these for different powers or gods, let them learn that all of these are expressions and names of one and the same [God].

Si autem quidam secundum hebraeam linguam diuersas dictiones positas in scripturis opponant, quale est Sabaoth et Eloae et Adonae et alia quaecumque sunt talia, ex his ostendere elaborantes diuersas Virtutes atque Deos, discant quoniam unius et ipsius significationes et nuncupationes sunt omnia huiusmodi.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rousseau and Doutreleau, *SC* 294, 372.

<sup>2</sup> Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*, Studies in Judaism and Late Antiquity (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 37–39; 44–54; 223–227. For the texts of Justin and Theophilus, see *dial.* 61ff and *Autol.* 2.10–22.

<sup>3</sup> Barnes, *The Power of God*, 71, 73.

<sup>4</sup> *haer.* 2.35.3 (*SC* 294.362).

The text lists transliterations of various “Hebrew” names for God (Sabaoth, Eloae, Adonae, etc.). Irenaeus highlights the subtle linguistic differences between some titles (i.e. the difference between long or short vowels, so “Sabaōth ... means voluntary” but “Sabaoth refers to the first heaven”).<sup>5</sup> After the list of God’s titles—Lord of Hosts, Father of All, Almighty, the Highest, Lord of the Heavens, Creator, Builder—he claims that these names and pronouns (*nuncupationes et pronomina*) describe the divine activities of one and the same God: revealing the Father, containing all, and bestowing existence. The different names of God describe distinction in God’s activity, but not composite parts, powers, or gods.

In this exegesis of the Septuagint, Irenaeus has more in common with Jewish interpretation. Alan Segal has argued that Jewish interpretive traditions reacted against early Christian interpretations that defended two powers in heaven, and he traces debates between “Church Fathers” and “Gnostics” back to their different readings of “two powers in heaven” texts from the Septuagint.<sup>6</sup> Some Christians highlighted references to the Word in the Septuagint, while “Gnostic” Christians defended their view of multiple powers from these names.

5 He refers to the Hebrew and Jewish language (probably Aramaic), yet it is impossible to establish his familiarity with these linguistic or interpretive traditions. I hold that one cannot make a judgment call either way based on this text because the names of God are all transliterated in the extant Latin and Armenian manuscripts, so one can only guess what letters they originally contained. Grant references this paragraph, among others, to claim that Irenaeus had a minimal acquaintance with Hebrew. He also points to Irenaeus’ transliteration of Hebrew in *Dem* 43, his reference to the Ophite usage of the Hebrew names of God in *haer.* 1.30, and his reference to the Marcosian usage of Hebrew (or Aramaic or Syriac) in *haer.* 3.8.1 and 4.30.1–3. See R.M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, The Early Church Fathers (London: Routledge, 1996), 21–22. Thankfully, for the argument of this chapter, it is unnecessary to establish Irenaeus’ familiarity with Semitic languages. However, as shown in Unger’s notes on *haer.* 2.35, while it is difficult to align the transliterations of the God’s names with Irenaeus’ explanations, there are possible explanations. See Unger and Dillon, *ACW* 65, 167–168, n. 3–7. Daniélou shows similar exegesis in Tertullian (*Praex.* 5) and Hilary (*Tract. Psalm* 2.2). See Jean Daniélou, *The theology of Jewish Christianity*, trans. John A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 167–168.

6 This section, and Irenaeus’ description of the names of God, has garnered little attention. When examining this phenomenon in early Christianity, Marmorstein, Segal, and Grant recognise variety in early Christian interpretation of the Septuagint. See A. Marmorstein, “Zur Erklärung Der Gottesnamen bei Irenäus,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 25 (1926); Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 197–198; Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 21–22. A possible source for the lists of names of God can be found in texts like 3 Enoch 48B, though dating is difficult. For a summary of the early Christian usage of God’s names from the Septuagint, see François Bovon, “Names and Numbers in Early Christianity,” *New Testament Studies* 47 (2001): 268.

Irenaeus opposes reading the names of God from the Septuagint in a way that creates division within God, so at this juncture, he follows a Jewish interpretive reading more than either Christian reading.<sup>7</sup>

Earlier in *Against Heresies* Irenaeus used specific proof-texts to defend his view on the Hebrew names of God, but on this occasion, he appeals only to the harmony of scripture to support his claim regarding God's power.<sup>8</sup> He promises further scriptural evidence in the forthcoming book (*haer.* 2.35.2 and 2.35.4), but for now, the harmony of scripture provides the thrust of his evidence.<sup>9</sup>

the preaching of the apostles, the teaching of the Lord, the announcement of the prophets, the dictation of the apostles, and the service of the Law harmonise the praise of one and the same God and Father of all, not this and that other [God], nor [a God] having his substance from various gods or powers, but all things are from one and the same Father ...

consonat praedicatio apostolorum et Domini magisterium et prophetarum adnuntiatio et apostolorum dictatio et legislationis ministratio

7 Segal's argument is developed by Adiel Schremer, who demonstrates that Midrash writers of the first and second centuries used Exodus 20:2, which has two names simultaneously ("I am the *Lord* your *God*"), to argue against multiple divinities and for one and the same God, despite God's various names. See Schremer, "Midrash, Theology, and History: Two Powers in Heaven Revisited." At this juncture, he engages Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 38. Later (in *haer.* 3.6), Irenaeus will claim that "Lord" and "God" entail both Father and Son (see section 3 of this chapter).

8 The first time Irenaeus examined the Hebrew names of God (*haer.* 1.30), he opposed the Ophite cosmology by referring to Ephesians 1:21, a central passage to his later description of God's powers that opposes a creation separated from God. In *haer.* 1.30.4–5, Irenaeus described Ophite exegesis, which used Hebrew names of God to delineate a whole cosmological story with six distinct sons or angels/powers/dominions of God. He subtly differentiates this story from scripture. First, by citing the former part of Ephesians 1:21, he shows that in the Ophite system, one power acted outside the permission of the angels, archangels, virtues, powers, and dominions, and based on this verse, he argues that Christ is above every angel, power, and dominion. Then, by citing Isaiah 45:5–6 (cf. 46:9), he argues that this power declared himself to be the Father above all. For discussion of this passage, see Presley, *The Intertextual Reception of Genesis 1–3 in Irenaeus of Lyons*, 64–65. Ephesians 1:21 appears in *haer.* 3.7.1, in the context of the names and titles of God being attributed to Father and Son, in *haer.* 4.19.2, just before arguing that God created through His Hands. See also *haer.* 4.24.2 and 4.33.13.

9 This is the same kind of appeal to the harmony of scripture used to introduce other key theological claims, such as the mosaic of the king (*haer.* 1.8), the introduction to the exegesis of creation (*haer.* 2.2), and the introduction to divine simplicity (*haer.* 2.12–13).



unum eundemque omnium Deum Patrem laudantium et non alium atque alium, neque ex diuersis Diis aut Virtutibus substantiam habentem, sed ex uno et eodem Patre omnia.<sup>10</sup>

He uses this harmony of scripture to substantiate his claims: (1) that God's substance is not composed of various Gods or powers (*ex diuersis Diis aut Virtutibus substantiam habentem*); and (2) that God creates directly, not through Angels or some other power (*neque ab Angelis neque ab alia quadam Virtute*).<sup>11</sup> To some extent, this dependence on the harmony of scripture and this argument regarding God's power echoes the language of the Rule of Truth,<sup>12</sup> but it also includes language that later became central to Christian appropriations of Socratic descriptions of power. The proximity of God's substance, power, and titles in this second-century Christian text prefigures third-century discussions of God's power that adapted Plato in claims that: (1) activity unveils powers; (2) a name that describes a power becomes equated with the thing itself; and (3) a power imitates substance.<sup>13</sup> According to Michel Barnes, these three pieces were utilised differently in the Trinitarian discussions of Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Origen (either opposing the division in the "Gnostics" or lack of distinction in the Monarchians, depending on the text).<sup>14</sup> These three pieces are echoed in Irenaeus' argument: divine activity is not carried out by separate powers, God's names in the Septuagint are of "one and the same" God, and God's substance is not made up of separate powers. Though brief, these claims about God's power counter the view that a separated power caused creation and the view that God the creator is composed of parts or powers, the very argument developed by divine simplicity in *haer.* 2.13.

<sup>10</sup> *haer.* 2.35.4 (SC 294.364–366).

<sup>11</sup> *haer.* 2.35.4 (SC 294.366).

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the importance of the harmony of scripture and its relation to the Rule of Truth, see Chapter 1 section 5.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Barnes, *The Power of God*, 71–74.

<sup>14</sup> In Hilary, the causal sequence from medicine was applied to the way God is known through his capacity to act in God's substance, powers, and activities. This is based on Tertullian's *On the Soul*, where he speaks "of the soul in terms of its nature, its powers (*vires*), activities (*efficaciae*), and its works (*operae*)." See *De anima* 14.3 and 5–13. For Origen, the Son is the breath of God's power, not of God himself, and the Son is an effluence of God's glory/power, not of God Himself. Thus, "in *Commentary on John* 1.291, the understanding of power as external to God's own nature or existence serves as the conceptual support for the individual existence of the second person." For discussion in Barnes, see Barnes, *The Power of God*, esp. 99, 123.

## 2 Mutually Entailing Powers of God in Creation

Throughout *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus describes power in relation to God in three different ways, each of which can be found in the Rule of Truth: (1) God is above every *power* and angel; (2) God creates through his own *power*; and (3) God creates, not through another *power*, but through His Word and Wisdom.<sup>15</sup> The first does not address God's power directly, instead referring to created powers, which he differentiates from the power of divine activity. In the second and third, Irenaeus argues that creation did not occur beyond the power of God, but instead, that God himself is creator through his Word and Wisdom.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Irenaeus distinguishes between powers that are not God and the power of God (the creator/creature differentiation), with God's power entailing God's activity. Michel Barnes has argued that Tertullian's Latin texts uses *potestas* and *virtus* interchangeably to describe God's power, and it seems that Irenaeus' translator also used these terms interchangeably to convey the single Greek concept of *dynamis*.<sup>17</sup> Scholars have not generally identified the concept of "power" as significant in Irenaeus' thought,<sup>18</sup> but I argue that the terminology and concept of power is prevalent in Irenaeus' theology of creation, and he describes and labels God's powers as mutually entailing because of his commitment to divine simplicity.

15 *haer.* 1.22.1.

16 The concept of "power" in discourse about God was prominent in Christianity by the time of Irenaeus, including the systems of his opponents. For example, he refers to it when opposing the description of thirty Aeons, from the "followers" of Valentinus, or the description of Angels-creator, from Basilides. The importance of "power" in the Pauline exegesis of some of Irenaeus' opponents is demonstrated in Pagels' book, particularly in the chapters on Ephesians and Hebrews. See E.H. Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters* (London: Bloomsbury, 1992), 115–133; 41–56. Power is also prominent in Hermetic literature. For examples, see Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 184. Irenaeus seems to use "power" in these same three ways in the *Demonstration*. In particular, see *dem.* 5, 10, and 47.

17 Barnes, *The Power of God*, 103–106.

18 Lashier even argues that δύναμις, which is so prevalent in the Apologists, is absent from Irenaeus' argument. See Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity*, 120. Michel Barnes, who literally wrote the book on *dynamis*, does not explore the topic of power in his exhaustive article, Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology." One exception to this trend is Fantino, who notes that, when Irenaeus describes God's power in creation, there is a regular description of God's will, echoing back to *haer.* 1.12. Fantino, *La théologie d'Irénée*. Another exception is Steenberg, who claims that God's creative power is the only source for creation and is the foundation of Irenaeus' *creatio ex nihilo*, though he does not explore it further. Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 38–40.

## 2.1 Will and Power for Creation in Haer. 2.30.9 and 4.20

There are numerous references to God's power in creation from Book 2<sup>19</sup> and Book 4,<sup>20</sup> but by focusing on the descriptions of God's power in *haer.* 2.30.9 and 4.20, I can demonstrate how they develop language from the Rule of Truth. As stated, in the Rule of Truth (*haer.* 1.22): (1) God is above every power; (2) God did not create through some separate power; and instead, (3) God created through His Word and Spirit.<sup>21</sup> In each of these three passages, divine activity occurs through God's own power, and when describing powers outside God, God is above every power. In particular, God's power is central to Irenaeus' theology of creation, both for his *creatio ex nihilo*<sup>22</sup> and his description of God's will and power.<sup>23</sup> Fantino even labels them as the origin and summary of Irenaeus' Trin-

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- 19 For example, in *haer.* 2.2.3–6, when introducing the key scriptural passages for his theology of creation (Gen 1; Ps 32[33]; Jn 1:3; Eph 4:6; *Mand.* 1.1), Irenaeus argues that God did not need Angels or some sort of weaker power (*Virtute aliqua ualde inferiori*), but rather he himself created the world through his Word. *haer.* 2.2.4 (SC 294.38). This is comparable to *dem.* 5. For discussion, see Fantino, *La théologie d'Irénée*, 318; Barnes, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 97–99. Another example is *haer.* 2.1.2–4, and though Norris argues that Irenaeus' reference to "Almighty" is highlighting God's power, Briggman disagrees. See Norris, "Who Is the Demiurge?," 19; Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 74 n. 17. I follow Norris on this because, according to the LLT, *omnipotens* appears alongside *potentia*, *potestatis*, or *virtus* nine separate times (1.22.1; 2.6.1–2; 2.30.9; 2.35.3; 3.3.3; 3.11.1; 4.36.2; 5.1.1), some of which are examined in this chapter. Similarly, in *haer.* 2.10.2–4, Irenaeus twice affirms that God's will and power (*sua voluntate et virtute; virtutis et voluntati eius*) are responsible for the substance of created things. *haer.* 2.10.2–4 (SC 294.88–90). Fantino uses this passage to engage May's argument of Irenaeus' place in the Christian teaching of creation *ex nihilo*, arguing that this development was not only a philosophical one, but also scriptural (echoing 2Mac. 7:28 and Wisd. 1:14) and theological. Jacques Fantino, "L'Origine de la Doctrine de la Création *ex nihilo*," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 80 (1996); May, *Creatio ex nihilo*, 164–178. Both authors stress the importance of Theophilus.
- 20 Another example is *haer.* 4.32.1, where Irenaeus argues that both the many voices of scripture (Moses, the Gospel, and Paul from Gen 1:3; Jn 1:3; Eph 4:5–6) and the two covenants proclaim one and the same God who did not create the world through angels of "some other kind of power (*virtutem*)."
- 21 In the Rule of Truth (*haer.* 1.22.1), God does not create through angels or *powers* but through the Word and Spirit, and, there is not another God or *power* above the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and God's *power* can raise the dead.
- 22 Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 38–40. For *creatio ex nihilo* in Irenaeus, see Fantino, and for its importance for ensuing Christian usage, see May. Fantino, "L'Origine de la Doctrine de la Création *ex nihilo*," May, *Creatio ex nihilo*, 164–178.
- 23 He notes the relationship between God's will and power in the system of Irenaeus' opponents and in the Irenaeus' view on the creation of the substance of matter, and undergirds his account of *creatio ex nihilo*. Fantino, *La théologie d'Irénée*, see 198–202, 309–312, 83–86 for respective parts of the argument.

itarian thought.<sup>24</sup> While the terminology “Trinitarian” may have anachronistic implications, I do think *haer.* 1.22, 2.30.9 and 4.20 sequentially develop a core argument regarding God’s power. I have already argued that divine simplicity develops the language from the Rule of Truth (see Chapter 1, section 2), that, because of divine simplicity, God’s will entails God’s activity (see Chapter 3), and that God’s powers are mutually entailing (see Chapter 2, section 2.2). The next step is to bring these pieces together. The concept of divine simplicity means that God’s will entails God’s power, but allows for the distinct roles of Word and Wisdom. Because of simplicity, as God’s power, these roles are specified but not separated. In this section, I trace the way Irenaeus’ descriptions, particularly of God’s power entailing God’s will, develop from *haer.* 2.30.9 to *haer.* 4.20. The language of one God creating through his powers, first seen in the rule, is developed in these two passages into a more precise description of God’s distinct, but unseparated, powers. These more precise descriptions draw from divine simplicity. In *haer.* 2.30.9 he specifies that the Word is God’s power, and in *haer.* 4.20, he outlines specific roles of the Word and Wisdom as God’s own power.

Irenaeus uses the language of power to refute the creation accounts of his opponents and to advance his own view of creation.<sup>25</sup> In *haer.* 2.30.9, his argument has two parts. In these two parts, Irenaeus uses the terminology of power in the three different ways outlined above, one which refers to something outside of God (“God above every power”), and two which refer to God himself (“God creates through his Power” and “Word and Wisdom as His power”). For both, no power separated from God caused creation, but God himself created. In the first part of *haer.* 2.30.9, Irenaeus uses two scriptural citations to support his claim for creation through God’s will and power:

... he himself with himself made freely and through his own power, he arranged and completed everything, and his will is the substance of everything. Only this God is found, who made everything, the only Almighty

24 Fantino, *La théologie d'Irénée*, 283–285.

25 Irenaeus illustrates his opposition to certain creation accounts through the metaphor of an artisan, for just as a used tool deserves more credit than an unused tool, so too, the Demiurge in his opponents’ system that actually creates deserves more credit than the inactive spiritual realm (*haer.* 2.30.5). He also challenges his opponents’ understanding of Paul’s ascent to a third heaven to hear unutterable words, arguing that 2 Corinthians 12 does not substantiate a spiritual realm beyond the creator, but rather, Paul was permitted to see spiritual mysteries (*sacramenta perspicere spiritalia*), which are the “activities of God (*Dei operationes*) who made heavens and earth and fashioned and placed him in paradise” (*haer.* 2.30.7).

and only Father establishing and making everything, whether visible or invisible or perceptible or imperceptible, in heaven or on earth, through the Word of his power (Heb 1:3), and who adjusted and arranged everything by his Wisdom (cf. Prov 8:1; Ps 103[104]:4; Jer 51:15, and *Mand* 1.1), containing everything and the only one who cannot be contained by anyone (*Mand* 1.1).

... ipse a semetipso fecit libere et ex sua potestate et disposuit et perfecit omnia et est substantia<sup>26</sup> omnium uoluntas eius, solus hic Deus inuenitur, qui omnia fecit, solus Omnipotens et solus Pater, condens et faciens omnia, et uisibilia et inuisibilia et sensibilia et insensata et caelestia et terrena, *Verbo uirtutis suae*, et omnia aptauit et disposuit Sapientia sua, et omnia capiens, solus autem a nemine capi potest.<sup>27</sup>

As already argued, Hermas *Mandate* 1.1 is central to Irenaeus' theology of creation (alongside Gen 1–2; Ps 32[33]; Jn 1:1–3; and Eph 4:6), but in this passage Irenaeus adapts it to show that the God who created through his own power, created (*fecit*) through his Word and ordered (*aptauit et disposuit*) through his Wisdom.<sup>28</sup> God's Word and Wisdom are described through the same verbs used of God creating in *Mandate* 1.1, so God's will for creation is fulfilled through God's own power. Further along, he describes God creating through his power, this time in relation to the Word. By citing Hebrews 1:3, he claims that "the Word of His power" created and ordered through God's wisdom.<sup>29</sup> Irenaeus highlights God's will in this activity of creation: God created "freely" (*libere*) and "his will" (*uoluntas*) is the substance of all things."<sup>30</sup> For Irenaeus, God's will is the cause and foundation of the world, with the Almighty God (*Omnipotens*) creating

26 Harvey believes that the translator read οὐσία for αἰτία, suggesting that *substantia* was written in the translation instead of *causa*: see Hv 2.47.2 (1.368). While this would make the reading much neater, this seems unlikely, particularly since a central thread in Irenaeus' argument is for God as the source for the substance of creation (see *haer.* 2.2.4). However, the presence of *substantia* or *causa* does not affect my argument.

27 *haer.* 2.30.9 (SC 294.318–320).

28 Rousseau back-translates these latter Latin verbs as a doublets for a single Greek verb, and argues that Irenaeus is applying *Mandate* 1.1 to God's Word and Wisdom. Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 210, 333–334. Irenaeus seems to be using the description that the One God created and ordered (κτίσας καὶ καταρτίσας) *ex nihilo*. For discussion on the exegetical basis for Irenaeus' theology of creation, see Chapter 1, section 3.

29 For Irenaeus' use of Hebrews 1 in *haer.* 2.30.9, see Bingham, "Irenaeus and Hebrews," 69–71.

30 Steenberg notes this link between God's will and "the Word of his Power" citation of Hebrews 1:3, claiming that the actualisation of the Father's will occurs through the creative activity of the Son. See Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation*, 79–80.

everything through his own power (*ex sua potestate*), and the Father creating through the Word of his power (*uirtutis suae*) and perfecting by his Wisdom.<sup>31</sup> Already, I have argued that because of divine simplicity, God's will entails and is simultaneous with God's power in creation (see Chapter 3). Here, God's will for creation is perfectly fulfilled by his power, specifically the Word. In the search for the creator, only the one God will be found.

Irenaeus returns to the language of divine power in the second part of *haer.* 2.30.9, this time describing God above every power in the activity of creating and revealing, and specifying that the Word is the Son. He repeatedly opposes multiplicity, explicitly naming the God of Marcion, the Pleroma of thirty Aeons from the followers of Ptolemy and Valentinus (Western Valentinians, according to Thomassen's division), and the virginal light from the followers of Barbelo.<sup>32</sup> Irenaeus argues that the many titles of God in scripture refer to the creator as one and the same God, further linking God's titles and powers.<sup>33</sup> He cites Ephesians 1:21 to support his claim for the one creator God who is above "every Principality and Authority and Dominion and Power," a citation which he repeats at the end of the paragraph to claim that the Word, who is the Son, is eternally coexisting with the Father and eternally reveals the Father, "to Angels and Archangels and Dominions and Powers and all to whom God wants to be revealed."<sup>34</sup> Creation and revelation are linked through the activity of the Word, which he has already described as God's power. Though he does not directly refer to the power of God in this second part, he does specify that the Word of God's power is the Son through whom He creates and reveals, and this Son is differentiated from every created power.

In *haer.* 4.20, Irenaeus again uses the same the three uses of "power": (1) God is over every power, (2) God did not create through other powers but through his own power, and (3) God's Word is his power. As already argued, *haer.* 4.20 and the metaphor of God's Hands retains and develops several themes from *haer.* 2.30.9 (see Chapter 5), including God's will entailing God's power in the activity of creation and revelation. Though in *haer.* 2.30.9 it is stated directly, divine power can be surmised from the phrasing "not another power" in *haer.*

31 Wisdom 7:25 refers to Wisdom, power, and omnipotent God together, but their order in *haer.* 2.30.9 seems insufficient to substantiate a definitive claim for dependence.

32 See Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 9–27.

33 *haer.* 2.30.9 (SC 294.320). "Himself the Framer, himself the Creator, himself the Originator, himself the Maker, himself Lord of All," and "the one and only God, the Framer ... he is Father, he is God, he is Creator, he is Maker, he is Framer."

34 Ephesians 1:21 is also cited in *haer.* 1.30 for his argument regarding the Hebrew names of God.

4.20. Furthermore, he includes Ephesians 1:21 for describing God's power alongside the other passages used to support his claims regarding creation (Gen 1–2; Jn 1:3; Eph 4:6. *Mand.* 1.1).<sup>35</sup> The metaphor of God's Hands opposes the view that God created through another power.

Thus, the angels did not make nor form us, nor were the angels able to make in the image of God, nor was there another [creator] beyond the Word of the Lord, nor was there a power very distant from the Father of the universe. Nor did God lack those things for making which he himself had predetermined to be made for himself, as if he did not have his own hands. For he is always with his Word and Wisdom, Son and Spirit, through whom and in whom he made everything (cf. Heb 2:10) freely and of his own accord, about whom it was written, "Let us make human(s) according to our image and likeness" (Gen 1:26).

Non ergo angeli fecerunt nos neque plasmaverunt nos, neque enim angeli poterant imaginem facere Dei, neque alius quis praeter Verbum Domini,<sup>36</sup> neque virtus longe absistens a Patre universorum. Neque enim indigebat horum Deus ad faciendum quae ipse apud se praefinierat fieri, quasi ipse suas non haberet manus. Adest enim ei semper Verbum et Sapientia, Filius et Spiritus, per quos et in quibus omnia libere et sponte fecit, ad quos et loquitur, dicens: *Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram*.<sup>37</sup>

Between two citations of Genesis and the creation of humanity, Irenaeus opposes an angel or a distant power creating the world, and instead argues that God creates through his Word and by his Wisdom. God's will is fulfilled "through" his Son and "by" the Spirit, for God created what he predetermined (*praefinierat*), and God made freely and of his own accord (*libere et sponte*).<sup>38</sup> In the way that God created according to his will as predetermined (*haer.* 4.20.1), in that same way he revealed himself (*haer.* 4.20.5). The Almighty (*omnipotens*)

35 He also cites Daniel 7 and Isaiah 6, which were considered dangerous passages in the Jewish responses to the "two powers in heaven" heresy, and while the former only appears in *haer.* 4.20.11, the latter appears in both of the other two discussions (*haer.* 4.20.8 and 4.33.) See Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 34, 146–155.

36 *Verbum Domini* is in most Latin manuscripts, and followed by Hv 4.34.1 (2.213), but Rousseau (SC 264.626) replaces it with *verum Deum* from the Armenian.

37 *haer.* 4.20.1 (SC 100.624–626).

38 This phrasing opposes a creation caused by fate in *haer.* 2.5.4.

God, who cannot be seen (alluding to Ex 33:20), “will be seen by humans, if he wants (*volens*), by whomever he wants (*quibus vult*), and whenever he wants (*quando vult*), and in whatever way he wants (*quemadmodum vult*)” through the Son (4.20.5; cf. Jn 1:18).<sup>39</sup> By reading *haer.* 2.30.9 and 4.20 together, “through” and “in” the Son and Spirit, God’s power perfectly fulfills God’s will in the activity of creating and revealing. As argued above (see Chapter 3), the concept of divine simplicity leads Irenaeus to argue that God’s simultaneous will and activity cannot be separated (*haer.* 1.12), and God’s will entails God’s activity in the containment metaphor (*haer.* 2.1–6). Now he uses the same exegesis and terminology to show a similar unity between God’s will and power. Here, despite the distinct roles of Son and Spirit, there is no sense of separation between God’s will and God’s powers. In both *haer.* 2.30.9 and 4.20, because God is simple, God’s will entails God’s power. Irenaeus’ argument provides further clarity to the descriptions of God’s power from the Rule of Truth, and he argues in a way that is consistent with the principle of divine simplicity.

## 2.2 Power, Wisdom, and Goodness “Displayed Together” in *Haer.* 4.38

Irenaeus attempts, not only describing God’s mutually entailing names and powers, but also labelling them. First, God’s powers and titles are heard together (*coobaudiuntur* in *haer.* 2.13.8–9), and now, in *haer.* 4.38, he describes God’s power, wisdom and goodness as “displayed together” (*simul ... ostenditur; ὁμοῦ ... δείκνυται*). Irenaeus labels God’s power, wisdom and goodness as mutually entailing, and he distinguishes these attributes from what is created. Both of these passages follow the two parameters on language about God that Irenaeus develops in line with his account of divine simplicity (see Chapter 2, section 2).<sup>40</sup> In this passage, God’s power, wisdom, and goodness are displayed in God’s activity of creation, and God’s power is contrasted with humanity’s impotence. However, he also develops one of his parameters on language about God, for while God cannot be described through language with meaning that depends on composite humans, now Irenaeus describes humans through qualified language about the divine.

The differentiation between creator and creature lies at the core of the argument of *haer.* 4.38. Irenaeus answers the question, “Why didn’t God make humanity perfect (*τέλειον; perfectum*) from the beginning?” by claiming that

39 *haer.* 4.20.5 (SC 100.638).

40 Kunze also reads *haer.* 2.13.9 and 4.38.4 together. See Kunze, *Die Gotteslehre de Irenaeus*, 30–31.



humanity was infantile and therefore incapable of receiving, containing, and retaining perfection (τέλειον; *perfectum*) and immortality (ἀφθαρσία; *incorruptelae*).<sup>41</sup> It was not impotence or deficiency in God that caused imperfection in humanity, but a deficiency in humans, who are necessarily created and changing. God had the power to give humanity perfection, but humans did not yet have the power to retain it, though they did have the power of choice or freewill.<sup>42</sup> God's mutually entailing power, wisdom, and goodness underlie this discussion, functioning as the foundation for understanding God's activity.

But regarding God, power is simultaneously displayed, as are wisdom and goodness, indeed power and goodness in that he voluntarily established and made what was not yet [existing], wisdom in that he made it harmonious, suitable, and elaborate,<sup>43</sup> which, according to his immense kindness, will carry the glory of the unmade [One], increasing and enduring for a long time, as God gives the good without envy.

Circa Deum autem virtus simul et sapientia et bonitas ostenditur, virtus quidem et bonitas in eo quod ea quae nondum erant voluntarie constituerit et fecerit, sapientia vero in eo quod apta et consonantia quae sunt fecerit, quae quidem propter immensam ejus benignitatem augmentum accipientia et in multum temporis perseverantia infecti gloriam referunt, Deo sine invidia donante quod est bonum.

Περὶ τὸν Θεὸν δύνამεις ὁμοῦ καὶ σοφία καὶ ἀγαθότης δείκνυνται· δύνამεις μὲν καὶ ἀγαθότης ἐν τῷ τὰ μηδέπω ὄντα ἐκουσίως κτίζειν τε καὶ ποιεῖν, σοφία δὲ ἐν τῷ εὐρυθμᾷ καὶ ἐμμελῇ καὶ ἐγκατάσκευα τὰ γεγονότα πεποιημέναι, ἅτινα διὰ τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσιν αὐτοῦ ἀγαθότητα αὔξησιν προσλαβόντα καὶ ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἐπιμένοντα ἀγενήτου δόξαν ἀποίσεται, τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀφθόνως χαριζομένου τὸ καλόν.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *haer.* 4.38.1 (100.942–944).

<sup>42</sup> Choice and freewill are central to Irenaeus' argument, opposing the claim that some humans were made with an evil nature and others with a good nature. In the subsection *haer.* 4.37–39, Irenaeus highlights the power of choice in human beings (*potestatem electionis; quae liberum et suae potestatis; suae potestatis arbitrium*). Behr, Donovan, and Bacq all note this subdivision. See Bacq, *De l'ancienne à la nouvelle alliance selon S. Irénée*, 363–388; Donovan, *One Right Reading?*, 131–135; Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 98. For discussion on the link between divine will and human freewill, see Meijering, "Some Observations on Irenaeus' Polemic Against the Gnostics."

<sup>43</sup> In the Latin, it reads more like, "wisdom truly in that he made the things that exist suitable and harmonious."

<sup>44</sup> *haer.* 4.38.3 (SC 100.952).

In the work of creation, God's power, wisdom and goodness (and later God's immense kindness) are displayed simultaneously or together (*simul ... ostenditur*; ὁμοῦ ... δείκνυται). This echoes the labelling in *haer.* 2.13.8–9, where after stating that God is simple, he affirms that God's names and powers are “heard together” (*coobaudiuntur*). God is simple, therefore, although God's power and names are heard distinctly in scripture, and although God's power, wisdom, and goodness are displayed distinctly in creation, they are simultaneously displayed and entail one another. Irenaeus states that God's power and wisdom are shown in that he “established” and “made” voluntarily, and God's goodness in that he “made” harmoniously. These verbs of creation were previously linked to God's activity through His Word and by His Wisdom.<sup>45</sup> God's power entails God's wisdom and goodness in divine activity. When Irenaeus describes God's own power, whether as Word and Wisdom or as God's power in creation, he consistently argues that God's power entails God's will or activity, and is entirely different from *created* powers.<sup>46</sup>

45 These verbs for creating are later connected to Father, Son, and Spirit, contrasting the constant growth/increase of humanity. *haer.* 4.38.3: “Through this arrangement and such proportions (*convenientiam*; ῥυθμῶν) and such movement/construction (*ductu*; ἀγωγῆς), made and formed humanity came to be according to the image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26) of the unmade God (*infecti Dei*; τοῦ ἀγενήτου Θεοῦ): indeed, with the Father perceiving well and ordering (*sentiente et jubente*; εὐδοκοῦντος καὶ κελεύοντος) well, with the Son serving and forming (*ministrante et formante*; ὑπουργοῦντος καὶ πράσσοντος) rightly, with the Spirit nurturing and increasing (*nutriente et augente*; τρέφοντος καὶ αὐξοντος) rightly, and with humans gradually approaching and reaching (*proficiente et perveniente*; προκόπτοντος καὶ ἀνερχομένου) toward perfection. This is a becoming like the unmade (*infecto*; τοῦ ἀγενήτου).”

46 Initially, this description of God's “impersonal” powers (i.e. wisdom and goodness) may seem incomparable to God's “personal” powers (i.e. Word and Wisdom), but I would argue that this distinction is not made clear in the text. Irenaeus does have a conception of God's Word and Wisdom as the Son and Spirit which is certainly different from God's goodness. However, as it relates to the terminology of powers, Irenaeus does not distinguish between “personal” and “impersonal” powers of God, but between the power of the creator and created powers. This follows the creator/creature differentiation, so I follow this, rather a “personal” and “impersonal” distinction. For an example of a discussion that centres on differentiation between “impersonal” and “personal” descriptions of Spirit, including the point at which one can claim that Irenaeus had a conception of the Holy Spirit, see Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the theology of the Holy Spirit*, 190–194. A further example of this disagreement occurs in *haer.* 3.6, where Rousseau, Orbe, and Briggman disagree on whether “Spirit” should be interpreted in a trinitarian sense (personal Spirit) or Christological sense (impersonal spirit/power). Rousseau and Doutreleau, *sc* 211; Antonio Orbe, *La Uncion del Verbo* (Rome: Libreria Editrice dell'Universita Gregoriana, 1961); Orbe, *La Uncion del Verbo*; Anthony Briggman, “The Holy Spirit as the Uncion of Christ in Irenaeus,” *JTS* 61, no. 1 (2010).

The creature/creature differentiation is emphasised in this passage. God's power, wisdom, and goodness are identified with God in the strongest of terms, since they carry the glory of the unmade and they establish what had not yet existed.<sup>47</sup> In this passage, what is unmade is explicitly differentiated from what is made.

Indeed, it follows that things which are made are not unmade, and it follows that what is enduring for many ages will share in the power of the unmade [One], with God freely giving to them sempiternal endurance.

Secundum enim id quod facta sunt, non sunt infecta; secundum id vero quod perseverant longis aeonibus, virtutem infecti assument Deo gratuito donante eis sempiternam perseverationem.

Κατὰ μὲν γὰρ τὸ γεγενῆσθαι αὐτά, οὐκ ἀγέννητα· κατὰ δὲ τὸ παραμένειν αὐτὰ μακροῖς αἰώσι, δύναμιν ἀγενήτου προσλήψεται, τοῦ Θεοῦ προῖκα δωρουμένου τὴν εἰς αἰὲ παραμονὴν αὐτοῖς.<sup>48</sup>

Divinity is categorically different from created nature, for only God is unmade, perfect, and eternal.

Indeed, the unmade [One] is perfect, and this is God.

perfectus enim est infectus, hic autem est Deus

τέλος γὰρ ὁ ἀγέννητος, οὗτος δὲ ἐστὶ Θεός<sup>49</sup>

And yet, while humanity is begotten, and therefore distinct, some of the very things that distinguish divinity (i.e. eternity and perfection) are provided to humanity, though to a lesser degree: rather than eternity, humanity is provided

47 In *haer.* 5.17.1, Irenaeus describes particular divine titles, wherein "The Creator, who according to his love is Father, but according to his power is Lord, and according to his wisdom is our Former and Maker ...". Widdicombe uses this passage to argue that Irenaeus assigns particular attributes to particular divine titles, "Father" being distinct from the other divine titles. See Widdicombe, "Irenaeus and the Knowledge of God as Father," 145.

48 *haer.* 4.38.3 (SC 100.952).

49 *haer.* 4.38.3 (SC 100.956).

with sempiternality (a beginning with no end), and rather than perfection, humanity is provided with a constant approach toward perfection and incorruption.<sup>50</sup> Humanity is described through qualified language of divinity.<sup>51</sup>

This passage uses a similar labelling of God's power as in the definition of divine simplicity. It differentiates God's power, wisdom and goodness from things that are created, and instead, only compares God with himself, as in the definition of divine simplicity. However, this passage also develops Irenaeus' parameter that differentiates creatures for the creator. Initially, God's power, wisdom, and goodness are differentiated from language about humanity. When describing God's power, wisdom, and goodness, they are not understood through an anthropomorphic lens. Instead, they display the glory of the unmade and are compared and described in terms of each other, so God's power, wisdom, and goodness are mutually entailing in the activity of creation. In his definition of divine simplicity, the human process of thinking could not be applied to God, since God cannot be measured by external things, and so lies beyond comparison. Instead, God could only be compared with himself, since God is only "similar and equal to himself" (*haer.* 2.13.3). There is a similar argument made for language about God in *haer.* 4.38.3, for God's wisdom, power and goodness are clearly distinguished from what is created and compared with other descriptions of God. However, all comparison between God and humanity is not erased. Instead, one direction of comparison is permitted: from creator to creature. Irenaeus uses the language of divinity to describe something created, though the differentiation between creator and

50 In *haer.* 4.38.3, Irenaeus describes this constant approach. "Indeed it is necessary that humanity first be made (*fieri*; γενέσθαι), and the made to be increased (*augeri*; αὐξήσαι; cf. Gen 1:28), and the increased to be matured (*corroborari*; ἀνδρωθῆναι), and the matured to be multiplied (*multiplicari*; πληθυνθῆναι cf. Gen 1:28), and the multiplied to be strengthened (*convalescere*; ἐνισχυθῆναι), and the strengthened to be glorified (*glorificari*; δοξασθῆναι), and the glorified to see their Lord (*videre*; ἰδεῖν), for God can be seen (*videri*; ὁραθῆναι), indeed vision of God is effective for imperishability (*incorruptelae*; ἀφθαρσίας), [and] 'imperishability is truly able to bring one near to God' (Wisd 6:19; cf. 1 Cor 15:50–54)."

51 There are some parallels between this argument, and the concept of *oikeiosis* as described by Klein and Striker. See Jacob Klein, "The Stoic Argument from Oikeiosis," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. V. Caston (Oxford: OUP, 2016); Gisela Striker, "The role of oikeiōsis in Stoic ethics," in *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics*, ed. G. Striker (Cambridge: CUP, 1996). Irenaeus' argument here might be part of a Christian appropriation of the Stoic concept of *oikeiosis*. In particular, his argument parallels the writings of Clement and Origen, which Ramelli has labelled as applying *oikeiosis* to human-divine relations. See Ilaria Ramelli, "The Stoic Doctrine of Oikeiosis and its Transformation in Christian Platonism," *Apeiron* 47, no. 1 (2014).

creatures remains (i.e. eternal vs. sempiternal). This direction of comparison makes discourse about God obliquely possible.

### 3 Mutually Entailing Titles and Names of God in Scripture

The concept of divine simplicity also guides exegesis and interpretation of scriptural names and titles of God in the latter parts of *Against Heresies*. In particular, the concept regulates meaning of divine names and titles so that they are understood as mutually entailing.<sup>52</sup> Irenaeus argues that the names and titles associated with the Father (“Lord” or “God”) also entail the Son, and names and titles associated with the Son (“Christ”) also entail the activity of the Father. These names and titles are distinct, not identical, when describing a simple God.<sup>53</sup> Some scholars have concluded that Irenaeus does not address the relationship between the names of God and the activities they entail.<sup>54</sup> I attempt to demonstrate that he does address God’s names, and I argue that Irenaeus’ commitment to the concept of divine simplicity differentiates his treatment of divine names and titles from the Apologists.

In second-century texts that Irenaeus accessed, describing God as ineffable was common. In the letter of the martyrs of Vienne and Lyons, which may have been carried by Irenaeus himself, Attalus affirms that God does not have a

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52 Irenaeus’ translator uses *nomina* and *appellationes* interchangeably, so while I lean toward the English translation “title,” because Irenaeus’ arguments regularly oscillate between both terms without clarifying a sense of a personal “name” or an established “title,” I will do the same.

53 This is, again, pushing against the terminology of “identical” used of God’s names and powers in *haer.* 2.13 by Stead and Briggman. For discussion, see Chapter 2, section 2.2.

54 According to Widdicombe, “Irenaeus, however, never makes either the indescribability of, or the grounds for assigning titles to, the divine nature a matter of analysis, nor does he address the question of the relationship between them.” This view is shared by Brian Daley, who states, “The continuing theme of [Irenaeus’] work is the unity of *God*, a title which includes—in a way Irenaeus never fully articulates—both the unknown Father of Jesus, who is the God of the Old Testament, and God’s two ‘hands,’ who work his will in history: his Son, or Word, and his Holy Spirit, or Wisdom.” Irenaeus’ argument on names and titles is not developed in the context of the two hands, nor is it applied directly to the Holy Spirit, but I think these criticisms are based on the expectation that Irenaeus will answer fourth-century questions. Widdicombe, “Irenaeus and the Knowledge of God as Father,” 143; Daley, *God visible: Patristic Christology Reconsidered*, 69. Many scholars have examined *haer.* 3.18.3, but the focus is not on Irenaeus’ usage of God’s names, but rather, on the adoptionist implications of the titles of Christ (see section 3.2 below).

name like a human does.<sup>55</sup> Irenaeus' opponents claim God is nameless.<sup>56</sup> Justin and Theophilus also briefly examine scriptural titles and names for God in tension with God's ineffability. Theophilus of Antioch describes God as ineffable and indescribable,<sup>57</sup> but then lists thirteen "titles" alongside a brief explanation of each. He argues that God is revealed through his activity, but he does not examine the relationship these names have with one another, nor their relation to God's Hands.<sup>58</sup> Justin also claims God is ineffable, and he differentiates the titles of God from the names of Christ.<sup>59</sup> First, Justin describes God as ineffable, while requiring baptism in the name of God (1 *apol.* 61).<sup>60</sup> Later, he again claims God is ineffable, but claims that the *titles* of "Father" or "God" are differentiated from the *names* of "Jesus" and "Christ" (2 *apol.* 6).<sup>61</sup> Osborn concludes that, according to Justin, one cannot speak of God but only to him. In

55 HE 5.1 (SC 41.20) According to the text, Attalus responded in Latin, but Eusebius records it in Greek. ὁ θεὸς ὄνομα οὐκ ἔχει ὡς ἀνθρώπος. Gustave Bardy, ed., *Eusèbe de Césarée: Histoire Ecclésiastique, Livres V–VII*, SC 41 (Paris: du Cerf, 1955). For discussion, see Emmanuel Lanne, "Le nom de Jésus-Christ et son invocation chez saint Irénée de Lyon," *Irénikon* 48 (1975).

56 Irenaeus references many terms that, he claims, his opponents used to describe God as ineffable. For some of Irenaeus' opponents, God is beyond thought (προανεννόητος translated *proanenoetos* in *haer.* 1.11.3), beyond conception (ἀνεννόητος translated *incognoscibile* in *haer.* 1.15.5, 2.2.4 and *inexcogitabilis* in *haer.* 1.14.1), beyond expression (ἄρρητός translated *inenarrabilis* in *haer.* 1.11.3; 1.14.1; 1.15.5; 2.2.4; 2.13.4), or beyond name (ἄνόνόμαστος translated *innominabilis* in *haer.* 1.11.3; 1.15.5; and ἄκατονόμαστος translated *inenarrabilis* in *haer.* 1.1.1). For an examination of the Valentinian descriptions of the names of the ineffable God, see Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 442, 67–73.

57 ἄρρητον καὶ ἀνέκφραστον, though, ironically, he does refer to himself as "carrying the name of God" in *Autol.* 1.1.

58 For example, (a) "he is called God" (b) "on account of his putting everything in his own safety/stability ..." *Autol.* 1.3–4. θεὸς δὲ λέγεται διὰ τὸ τεθεικέναι τὰ πάντα ἐπὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ ἀσφαλείᾳ. For Greek and translation, see Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch ad Autolychum: Text and Translation*, 4–7.

59 Eric Osborn claims Justin's argument regarding God's names "grows more obscure." Osborn, *The Beginning of Christian Philosophy*, 50.

60 In 1 *apol.* 61, while discussing baptism, Justin explores the tension of being baptised in the name of God the Father despite God being ineffable. Note that, in *Dem.* 3, Irenaeus refers to Christians being baptised in the name of God the Father, and the name of Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit.

61 In 2 *apol.* 6, Justin affirms that God has no name ("ὄνομα"), since names are given by the elder and God has no elder, therefore, "Father, and God, and Creator, and Lord, and Master are not names, but titles derived from his benefits and works" (οὐκ ὀνόματά ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν εὐποιῶν καὶ τῶν ἔργων προσρήσεις). Translation from Osborn, *The Beginning of Christian Philosophy*, 36. See also 2 *apol.* 5.1–2. The Greek for 2 *apol.* 5–6 taken from Minns and Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies*, 285–296. In 2 *Apology*, Justin does not apply the use of "name" to baptism, but rather to its effectiveness in casting out demons.

contrast, Irenaeus does describe the relationship between the names of God, and he does not reject a relationship between the title “God” and the names of “Christ” and “Jesus.”<sup>62</sup> I argue that this difference in his view regarding God’s names and titles stems from his adherence to the principle of divine simplicity.

Irenaeus’ argument is very different from the apologists, but it has much in common with the later writings of Clement of Alexandria, who may have known of Irenaeus’ text and who also used the principle of divine simplicity in his exploration of God’s names. While exploring Paul’s discourse on the unknown God (Acts 17), Clement describes God as ineffable, but then goes on to clarify that, while certain names (the One, or the Good, or Mind, or Absolute Being, or Father, or God, or Creator, or Lord) cannot describe God wholly, “each by itself does not declare God, but all of them, collectively, indicate the power of the Almighty.”<sup>63</sup> In his examination of this passage, Osborn has claimed that Clement’s argument about God’s names is based on the concept of divine simplicity.<sup>64</sup> This is one passage where Clement’s otherwise strict apophatic view of simplicity provides something close to a positive statement about God. Irenaeus marks a shift, for he developed his argument for the names of God beyond the positions held by the Apologists, and he depends on divine simplicity to understand the names of God as mutually entailing in a way that has more in common with his readers than his predecessors.

### 3.1 *Titles of “God” and “Lord” Applied to Father and Son in Haer. 3.6.1*

As stated in the first section of this chapter, at the end of Book 2, Irenaeus promises further scriptural evidence for his argument that the names of God point to one creator. Irenaeus fulfills this promise at the beginning of Book 3, where he claims that the titles “God” and “Lord” in scripture refer to Father and Son (*haer.* 3.6).<sup>65</sup> In this passage, Irenaeus argues almost entirely from the

62 In *haer.* 3.6, he argues that the names and titles of the Old Testament refer to both Father and Son, in *haer.* 3.18.3 he describes the activity of the Father, Son and Spirit through the title “Christ,” and in *haer.* 4.17.6 he argues that the name of Christ in the Eucharist also implies the work of the Father.

63 Translation from Osborn, *The Beginning of Christian Philosophy*, 49, str. 5.12.82.1–2 (GSC 2.381). οὐ γὰρ τὸ καθ’ ἑκάστων μηνυτικὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ ἀθρόως ἅπαντα ἐνδεικτικὰ τῆς τοῦ παντοκράτορος δυνάμεως.

64 Osborn, *The Beginning of Christian Philosophy*, 49.

65 Throughout *haer.* 3.6–8, the argument retains a continuous thread referring to God’s names. He references proper reading techniques for understanding Paul and the Hebrew meaning of “mammon” for understanding Matthew 6:24, but in both he argues that the appearance of “power” or the title “God” does not prove another creator (*haer.* 3.7). Irenaeus also argues that the God who established and made is distinct from creation because he is self-sufficient, and therefore different titles/language (*vocabulum*) used for

Septuagint,<sup>66</sup> with six citations from the Psalms, one from Isaiah, and one from Genesis, with a single exception (an allusion to Romans). However, it seems that he is emulating Hebrews 1 and John 10 in their usage of these same passages from the Septuagint to support his claim that the titles “Lord” and “God” entail both Father and Son.<sup>67</sup> This provides a lens into the kind of exegesis used to develop the implications of divine simplicity.

According to Irenaeus, the “naming” of God in scripture occurred only by God’s power, for neither the Lord, the Spirit, nor the apostles teach that there is another God. The Holy Spirit and apostles neither titled nor named (from *nominare* and *appellare*) something else as “God” and “Lord,” but the Holy Spirit designated (*signavit*) the titles “God” and “Lord” in scripture.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, neither the Lord, nor the Holy Spirit, nor the apostles would precisely and absolutely ever have named one who is not God, unless He truly was God. Nor would they, from their own power, have called anyone Lord except God the Father who had dominion over all things, and His Son who received from His Father power over all creation, as is expressed in this passage: *The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool* (Ps 109[110]:1). This shows the Father speaking to the Son, who gave to Him the inheritance of the Gentiles and subjected to Him all enemies.<sup>69</sup>

Neque igitur Dominus neque Spiritus sanctus neque apostoli eum qui non esset Deus definitive et absolute Deum nominassent aliquando nisi esset uere Deus; neque Dominum appellassent aliquem ex sua persona nisi qui

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God should be unique to Him who made everything through his Word, and nothing created can share the same titles/language (*eiusdem vobaulti*) of God, Lord, or Creator (*haer.* 3.8.3).

66 Donovan notes that, apart from the allusion to Romans 8:15 at the end of *haer.* 3.6.1, all the scriptural citations from *haer.* 3.6.1–3 are from the LXX. Donovan, *One Right Reading?*, 69.

67 God’s names and powers are also explored by Philo, who argues that the powers on the right and left of the Father, which scripture calls *ho on*, are his senior powers “God” and “Lord,” the first of which made and ordered the universe, and the second by which he rules and controls what was brought into being. See *QE* 2.68 and discussion in Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, 162, 65.

68 As noted above, Rousseau, Orbe, and Briggman disagree on whether this reference to the Spirit should be interpreted in a trinitarian sense (personal Spirit) or Christological sense (impersonal spirit/power). Rousseau and Doutreleau, *sc* 211; Orbe, *La Uncion del Verbo*; Orbe, *La Uncion del Verbo*; Briggman, “The Holy Spirit as the Uncion of Christ in Irenaeus.”

69 Translation from Unger (ACW 64.38), with some changes.



dominatur omnium Deum Patrem, et Filium eius qui dominium accepit a Patre suo omnis conditionis, quemadmodum habet illud: *Dixit Dominus Domino meo: Sede ad dexteram meam, quousque ponam inimicos tuos suppedaneum pedum tuorum.*<sup>70</sup> Patrem enim Filio collocutum ostendit, qui et dedit ei hereditatem gentium et subiecit ei omnes inimicos.<sup>71</sup>

According to Irenaeus, the Lord, the Holy Spirit, and the apostles (1) would not have named (*nominassent*) someone “God” who was not, and (2) they would not have named (*appellassent*) anyone “Lord” merely on their own account (*ex sua persona*), which Unger translates “from their own power.”<sup>72</sup> Irenaeus opposes the view that God is revealed by a separated power, much like his earlier argument against a creation from a separated power, since God is simple (*haer.* 2.1–13). Once again, creation and revelation are understood in light of one another. Instead of viewing revelation as from a separated power, the Holy Spirit designated (*signavit*) the title of “Lord” and “God” according to the authority and will of Father and Son, who have authority (*dominium*) over all things, and by this authority the title “Lord” entails both the Father and Son. The Spirit, through the power of God, described both Father and Son with titles “Lord” and “God.”

Although this argument for God’s titles depends heavily on the Septuagint, I argue that Hebrews 1 and John 10 are guiding his exegesis in order to reinforce his theological point that the names and titles of “Lord” and “God” entail both Father and Son, but as his usage of Genesis 19:24 demonstrate, they remain distinct. Because this exegesis develops his assertion that God’s titles are mutually entailing (*haer.* 2.13.9), this passage provides another exegetical reference point for the principle of divine simplicity:

70 Harvey notes that this same passage is used similarly in Matthew 22:44 and Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho*. See Hv 3.6.1 (2.21).

71 *haer.* 3.6.1 (SC 211.64).

72 I agree with Unger, against Rousseau, that the subjunctive mood in the Latin does not need to be corrected to simple fact, for the subjunctive in this passage makes good sense. See D.J. Unger and rev M.C. Steenberg, eds., *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against Heresies, Book 3*, ACW 64 (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 134, n. 2; Rousseau and Doutreleau, SC 210, 65, n. 1.1. Unger notes that *ex* (or *a*) *persona sua* appears six times in Book 3 (6.1, 3, 5; 9.1; 10.1, 5), and twice in Book 5 (in 25.2). Options range from “ohne Vorbehalt” to “in their own persons.” He prefers Sagnard, who shows that the Greek term *αὐτοπροσώπως* is used of actors who do not wear a mask or impersonate someone else, but spoke in their own name. Unger and Steenberg, ACW 64, 133–134, n. 1; F. Sagnard, ed., *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les Hérésies, Livre III*, SC 34 (Paris: du Cerf, 1952), 129. This can be compared to *haer.* 4.38.4, where Irenaeus speaks of freewill as *suae potestatis homines*.

Since, therefore, the Father is truly Lord, and the Son truly Lord, the Holy Spirit deservedly designated them by the title "Lord." Again, in regard to the destruction of the Sodomites, scripture says, *Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven* (Gen 19:24). Here He points out that the Son, who also spoke to Abraham, had received power from the Father to condemn the Sodomites because of their wickedness. The same is contained in this passage: *Your throne, O God, is forever; the scepter of Your kingdom is a scepter of equity. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore, God your God, has anointed you* (Ps 44[45]:7,8).

The Spirit designates both of them by the title "God": the Son who is anointed and the Father who anoints. Again, *God has taken His place in the council of the gods, and in the midst of the gods He holds judgment* (Ps 81[82]:1). He is speaking of the Father and Son, and of those who received the filial adoption; these, however, are the Church [*Ecclesia*], for she is God's assembly, which God, that is, the Son, assembled by Himself. Of Him [the Spirit] also says, *The God of gods, the Lord has spoken, and He has summoned the earth* (Ps 49[50]:1). Which God? The one of whom He said, *God will come manifestly, yea our God, and He will not keep silence* (Ps 49[50]:3). This is the Son, who came to men by a manifestation of Himself. He it is who said, *I have shown myself to those who did not seek for me* (Is 65:1; Rom 10:20). Of what gods [is He God]? Of those of whom He said, *I have said, "You are gods, sons of the Most High"* (Ps 81[82]:6; Jn 10:34). Of those, namely, who have received the grace of filial adoption, by virtue of which we cry, *Abba, Father* (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5–6).<sup>73</sup>

Vere igitur cum Pater sit Dominus et Filius uere sit Dominus, merito Spiritus sanctus Domini appellatione signauit<sup>74</sup> eos. Et iterum in euersione Sodomitarum Scriptura ait: *Et pluit Dominus super Sodomam et Gomorram ignem et sulfur a Domino de caelo*.<sup>75</sup> Filium enim hic significat, qui et Abraham collocutus sit, a Patre accepisse potestatem adiudicandi Sodomitas propter iniquitatem eorum. Similiter habet illud: *Sedes tua, Deus, in aeternum; uirga directionis uirga regni tui. Dilexisti iustitiam, et odisti iniquitatem; propterea unxit te, Deus, Deus tuus*.

73 Translation from Unger (ACW 64.38–39).

74 According to LS, under the word *signo*, section I.B, this can refer to the imprint of a stamp or seal, but also "to designate."

75 In applying the "no one has seen the father" principle from John 1:18, Harvey argues that Irenaeus and Tertullian (*Praesr.* 13), show the Son as revealer. See Hv 3.6 (2.21), n. 2.

Vtrosque enim Dei appellatione signauit Spiritus, et eum qui ungitur Filium et eum qui ungit, id est Patrem. Et iterum: *Deus stetit in synagoga deorum, in medio autem deos discernit*.<sup>76</sup> De Patre et Filio et de his qui adoptionem perceperunt<sup>77</sup> dicit; hi autem sunt Ecclesia: haec enim est synagoga Dei, quam Deus, hoc est Filius, ipse per semetipsum collegit. De quo iterum dicit: *Deus deorum Dominus locutus est et uocauit terram*. Quis Deus? De quo dixit: *Deus manifeste ueniet, Deus noster, et non silebit*, hoc est Filius, qui secundum manifestationem hominibus aduenit, qui dicit: *Palam apparui his qui me non quaerunt*. Quorum autem deorum? Quibus dicit: *Ego dixi: Dii estis et filii Altissimi omnes*, his scilicet qui adoptionis gratiam adepti sunt, per quam *clamamus: Abba Pater*.<sup>78,79</sup>

The first exegetical move to note is the pairing together of Psalm 109[110]:1 and Psalm 44[45]:7,8, which also occurs in Hebrews 1:8–13.<sup>80</sup> Jeffrey Bingham claims that Irenaeus' argument parallels Hebrews 1–3 in the way it applies the titles "Son" and "God" only to Jesus, and not to angels.<sup>81</sup> Because these Psalms appear together and because he closes out *haer.* 3.6.5 with a citation from Hebrews 3:5, I agree that he is using the argument from Hebrews regarding the Son. Psalm 109[110]:1 was often applied to Christ in the early Church,<sup>82</sup> and Irenaeus has

76 Rousseau defends a reading of "assembly of God" rather than "assembly of the gods", while Unger follows the textual reading ("of the gods") and calls upon Behr's defense of this reading based on a literal reading of Ps 81[82]:1 which provides the implication that humans can be genuinely established as sons of God. Rousseau and Doutreleau, *SC 210*, 252–253; Unger and Steenberg, *ACW 64*, 39 and 134, n. 8; Behr, *Asceticism and anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, 69–71.

77 Harvey points to a similar interpretation of this Psalm by Tertullian in *Praex.* 13, and in parallel with John 3:2–3, he points to Hippolytus. See Hv 3.6.1 (2.21–22), n. 1.

78 Both Unger and Rousseau note that Irenaeus unequivocally calls the Son "God," unlike Justin's language in 1 *apol.* 13.3 and *dial.* 56. See Rousseau and Doutreleau, *SC 210*, 254; Unger and Steenberg, *ACW 64*, 134, n. 14.

79 *haer.* 3.6.1 (*SC 211*.64–68).

80 Theodoret also uses Ps 44[45] to support his interpretation of Ps 109[110]:1 without citing Hebrews 1. See *comm. Ps 110.2*.

81 Bingham, "Irenaeus and Hebrews," 70–71.

82 Dragutinović traces the Christo-centric interpretation of this passage in Clement of Rome, Polycarp, *Epistle of Barnabas*, and Justin. See Predrag Dragutinović, "Psalm 110 im Neuen Testament und in der frühen Kirche. Ein Stück Frühchristlicher Theologiegeschichte," *Sacra Scripta* 11, no. 1 (2013): 105–111. According to *Biblia Patristica*, this single verse is quoted by Irenaeus ten times, and just around the second century, Justin, Tertullian, *Ascension of Isaiah*, *Epistula Apostolorum*, *Epistle of Barnabas*, and Clement of Alexandria cite it. See *Biblia Patristica: Index de citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature patristique*, 197–198.

already used it to support his principle of divine simplicity. His first citation of Psalm 109[110]:1 occurs after a reference to God as “all Mind and all Logos” (*haer.* 2.28.5) and against a separation between God’s Word and Understanding (*haer.* 2.28.6), two key elements for the principle of divine simplicity. Since he has already read Psalm 109[110]:1 to describe the powers of a simple God, and since he has described titles of a simple God as mutually entailing (*haer.* 2.13.8–9), a reading of Hebrews 1–3 through the lens of divine simplicity provides him with the language to argue that the title “Lord” entails both Father and Son.

The second exegetical move to note is Irenaeus’ usage of Genesis 19:24.<sup>83</sup> Already, in the second century, Justin has used this passage to argue that the Father and Son are distinct, and Irenaeus in *Dem.* 44 makes similar exegetical moves.<sup>84</sup> In *Dem.* 44, he cites both Genesis 18:1–3, when three figures appear to Abraham, and Genesis 19:24, where the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is carried out by the Lord of earth by the authority of the Lord of heaven. In the *Demonstration*, Irenaeus argues that the theophany of the first passage was the Son of God, and the second passage’s reference to Lord in two ways refers to the authority of the Father being fulfilled by the Son. Both authors use this verse to argue that these references to “Lord” describe the Father and the Son, but while Justin emphasises distinction between Father and Son, claiming that there are two in number (*dial.* 129), Irenaeus retains a sense of this distinction while arguing for a unity of their activity. Irenaeus argues that the Scriptural term “Lord” is mutually entailing, referring to both Father and Son, but he argues through the same passage that Justin used to argue for distinction (or separation) between Father and Son, which, in turn, became the passage used (along with key Psalms) in later anti-Monarchian writings. While other authors used Genesis 19:24 to emphasise distinction, Irenaeus uses it in an argument for unity. Unity and distinction are in tension in the Scriptural passages used by Irenaeus.<sup>85</sup>

The third exegetical move to note is Irenaeus’ use of Psalm 81[82]. Though a bit more speculative, it appears to echo John 10 and its argument that Christ (“the anointed”) is God and is doing the works of the Father. First, Irenaeus

83 Many thanks to Dr. Samuel Fernández, who pointed out the importance of this passage, particularly in relation to Ps 44[45] and 109[110] in relation to Justin’s Christology and later anti-Monarchian writings.

84 See *dial.* 56; 60.4; 127.5; and 129.1. This exegetical dependence is noted in Bogdan G. Bucur, “Scholarly Frameworks for Reading Irenaeus: The Question of Theophanies,” *VC* 72 (2018): 273–274.

85 Irenaeus’ exegesis of Genesis 19:24 alongside Psalm 44[45] is comparable to the exegetical moves in Tertullian’s anti-Monarchian argument in *Praex.* 13.

needs to explain the different references to “God” in scripture. While explaining how the title “God” applies to both the anointing Father and the anointed Son, but “gods” refers to the church, Irenaeus uses two Psalms (81[82]:6 and 49[50]:1, 3), culminating in a citation of the same verse used in John 10:34. In John 10, after asking if he was the Christ (“anointed”), the people are ready to stone Jesus for calling himself “God” in a passage where, among other things, he describes himself (1) as the Good Shepherd,<sup>86</sup> (2) as in the Father (referenced in *haer.* 3.6.2), and (3) as doing works in the *name* of the Father. These three themes appear in the text of Irenaeus. Furthermore, Jesus answers the accusation, that he calls himself “God,” with a citation of Psalm 81[82]:6.<sup>87</sup> Irenaeus seems to follow a Johannine reading of these Psalms to differentiate the meaning of the title “God” from “gods.” According to his reading of these Psalms, Christ accomplishes a work that includes the Father and the Son, since, for him, the work of both the anointing Father and the anointed Son are entailed in the title “Christ.” This is compatible with the argument made by Anthony Briggman, who examines the passages following *haer.* 3.6.1 to argue that Irenaeus is using John 14:9–10 to describe “reciprocal eminence” of the Son in the Father.<sup>88</sup> A Johannine reading of the LXX is guiding his explanation of God’s names.

While Irenaeus never directly cites either Hebrews 1–3 or John 10, his similar citations of the Septuagint and the similarity in arguments about the Father and Son suggest they were informing his argument regarding God’s names.<sup>89</sup>

86 Ps 49[50]:14 describes death itself as a shepherd of the sheep.

87 Irenaeus’ interpretation of Ps 81[82]:1 and the “assembly of the gods” being the church is linked to his citation from Is 65 (since it does not refer to “God” or “gods”) as a description of the Church, and follows the text of Jn 10:22–39 and the theme of Christ’s sheep recognising his voice and following him. Rousseau defends a reading of “assembly of God” rather than “assembly of the gods,” while Unger follows the textual reading (“of the gods”) and calls upon Behr’s defense of this reading based on a literal reading of Ps 81[82]:1, which provides the implication that humans can be genuinely established as sons of God. See Rousseau and Doutreleau, *SC* 210, 252–253; Unger and Steenberg, *ACW* 64, 39 and 134, n. 8; Behr, *Asceticism and anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement*, 69–71.

88 Briggman, *God and Christ in Irenaeus*, 107–115. Briggman’s focus is *haer.* 3.6.2 onward, and he argues that it is not clear how reciprocal immanence and divine simplicity fit together, nor how Irenaeus uses the rest of John 14:10, “the Father in the Son,” based on Book 3. For this latter part of this verse, he goes to *haer.* 2.17. My exploration of *haer.* 3.6.1 seeks to make a more direct connection between divine simplicity and the argument concerning Father and Son, but I agree with Briggman’s larger claim regarding the reciprocal immanence of the Father and Son.

89 In this passage, Irenaeus also cites Exodus 3 twice, a chapter that has been referenced as the basis for divine simplicity. See Platter, “Divine Simplicity and Reading Scripture: Exodus 3:14 and God as Being-Itself.” Irenaeus’ exegesis may provide further proof. For

His claim, that the names of God entail both Father and Son, explicitly depends on the Septuagint, but implicitly depends on arguments from John 10 and Hebrews 1–3.

This first section allows some preliminary conclusions. Irenaeus' exegesis develops his claims for divine simplicity as it relates to God's titles. This exegesis is multi-layered. It depends on his view of scriptural harmony, with diverse passages from the Septuagint, particularly the Psalms, being read together with the Gospel of John and Hebrews. It also depends on the Rule of Truth and its claim for the one God of scripture. Already, Irenaeus is very different from Justin. Rather than differentiating between the titles exclusively referring to Father or Son as Justin does, for Irenaeus, the titles "Lord" and "God" entail both Father and Son. Because of divine simplicity, the many names and titles of the one God of scripture entail both the Father and Son. Furthermore, he has stated that the title "Christ" describes the work of both Father and Son, with, "the Son who is anointed and the Father who anoints." These titles are mutually entailing and are used in two directions of comparison: from Father to Son, and from Son to Father, as further demonstrated in the next section.

### 3.2 *Title "Christ" and the Divine Activity of Anointing in Haer. 3.18.3*

The statement from *haer.* 3.6.1 "The Spirit designates ... by the title 'God' the Son who is anointed and the Father who anoints" is developed in *haer.* 3.18.3 to include and explain the anointing activity of Father, Son, and Spirit. Irenaeus includes the baptism of Christ, the event of Pentecost, and baptism in the church. Scholars agree that in *haer.* 3.16, there is a shift in Irenaeus' argument,<sup>90</sup> but they disagree on its theological implications.<sup>91</sup> I argue that Irenaeus is again

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example, Genesis 19:24, which is cited between Psalm 109[110]:1 and Psalm 44[45]:7,8, is also cited by Tertullian (*Praesr.* 13) to support his exegesis of John 1:18, and the "no one has seen the father" principle. See Hv 3.6 (2.21), n. 2.

90 Rousseau, Donovan, Behr and Moringiello show *haer.* 3.16 as a shift in argument. Rousseau and Doutreleau, *SC 211*, 494; Donovan, *One Right Reading?*, 79–84; Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 94; Moringiello, *The Rhetoric of Faith*, 95–101.

91 To some extent, the field of secondary scholarship on *haer.* 3.17–18 is a theological minefield, where God's names and titles have been peripheral in specifically Christological or soteriological arguments. As an example, see the exchange between McDonnell and Smith. Daniel A. Smith, "Irenaeus and the Baptism of Jesus," *Theological Studies* 58, no. 4 (1997); Kilian McDonnell, "*Quaestatio Disputata*: Irenaeus on the Baptism of Jesus," *Theological Studies* 59, 2 (1998); Daniel A. Smith, "A Response to Kilian McDonnell," *Theological Studies* 59, 2 (1998). For a recent summary of scholarship, see Briggman, "The Holy Spirit as the Unction of Christ in Irenaeus," n. 1. Both Eric Osborn (2001) and Denis Minns (2010) highlight this shift of Irenaeus' argument in *haer.* 3.17, emphasizing the soteriological implication that a person cannot be made one with Christ without the Spirit. See Minns,

using his mutually entailing view of God's titles. This in turn shines new light on Christological readings of this passage, thereby supporting the claim made by Anthony Briggman, that the unity of Christ is imperative for understanding *haer.* 3.18.3.<sup>92</sup>

There are two modern readings of Irenaeus' opposition to an adoptionist view of Christ, and each reading hinges on *haer.* 3.18.3. Antonio Orbe focuses on the different titles for the Son, arguing that "Son of God" is Irenaeus' title for the Son's divine nature, while "Son of Man" is the title for his human nature, and "Son of the Father" refers to the adoption which occurred at the baptism at the Jordan.<sup>93</sup> In his reading, Jesus came to be Jesus Christ ("anointed") at his baptism, when he was anointed.<sup>94</sup> Orbe concludes this based on Irenaeus' statement "he became a Son of God" (*fiat filius Dei*; γέννηται υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ), which he applies to Christ in the context of baptism and adoption.<sup>95</sup> According to his reading, at his baptism, Jesus became the Christ, the anointed Son of God. Two points allow for a different reading. First, when this argument for anointing was first introduced, Irenaeus interpreted this same Psalm 81[82]:6–7 to refer to the Church, which was adopted and became a son of God (in *haer.* 3.6.1). Second, the texts that describe Jesus as the Son of God also describe

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*Irenaeus*, 129–130; Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 132–134. Both read this passage sacramentally, with the Spirit as the water from heaven, and later linked to the Eucharist in *haer.* 3.24. This is similar to Behr, who traces the links between the baptism of Christ, the anointing at Pentecost, and the person who is baptised. See Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 175–179. While these emphases are distinct, they are not mutually exclusive, unlike the debates on Irenaeus' Christology.

92 Briggman, "The Holy Spirit as the Unction of Christ in Irenaeus," 171–193.

93 Orbe, *La Uncion del Verbo*, 501–511; Antonio Orbe, "¿San Ireneo adopcionista? En torno a *adv. haer.* III,19,1," *Gregorianum* 65, no. 1 (1984); Smith, "Irenaeus and the Baptism of Jesus." Both Smith and Orbe argue for a qualitative change of Christ at the baptism, but Smith develops this argument by claiming that the anointing by the Spirit led to the deification of Christ's humanity. Orbe, "¿San Ireneo adopcionista? En torno a *adv. haer.* III,19,1," 46–47, 50. His entire argument hinges on the ways the titles of a son are given. Orbe, "¿San Ireneo adopcionista? En torno a *adv. haer.* III,19,1," 13. The categories are: (a) son by nature ("son of so-and-so"), (b) son by act (although by nature son of Joe, he is adopted by Fred and becomes son of Fred), and this second category is divided into (ba) a son by creation, which includes humans and angels as sons of God and (bb) a son by pronouncement, such as a disciple who is made a son of the teacher.

94 Orbe, *La Uncion del Verbo*, 504. He also holds to this position in Orbe, *Teologia de San Ireneo*, 4.238, n. 39.

95 *haer.* 3.19.1 (SC 211.374). This is certainly an interpretive option for *conmixtus ... filius Dei*, and Orbe lays out the three options found in different manuscripts: (a) Christ as man, read by Theodoret and Erasmus, (b) Christ to those who believe, read by Feuardent, and (c) humanity, read by Massuet and Petua. See Orbe, "¿San Ireneo adopcionista? En torno a *adv. haer.* III,19,1," 35–38.

the Son of God as born (see *haer.* 3.19.2 where Son of God and Son of Man are equated at his birth). It therefore seems more likely that “becoming Son of God” is describing the Church. This second reading, most recently defended by Anthony Briggman, argues that Irenaeus does not present a qualitative change at Christ’s baptism, for this would jeopardise the very unity of the incarnation which Irenaeus affirms.<sup>96</sup> I agree with Briggman, and suggest that the mutually entailing principle for God’s names and titles further bolsters his argument. Many of Orbe’s complex theological discussions hinge on Irenaeus’ usage of titles, but if one reads *haer.* 3.16–19 continuously, Irenaeus’ employment of the titles Son of God, Son of Man, Emmanuel, Jesus, and Christ continually return to his claim that these different titles entail the same, unseparated, Jesus Christ. They do not mark different ontological states across periods of time. Since Irenaeus has already used the principle of mutually entailing names and titles of God to argue that the texts from the Septuagint describe the Son, it stands to reason that these different scriptural titles of Christ function similarly. They inform one another rather than differentiating natures at different periods.

In *haer.* 3.18.3, rather than parse out different historical references for Christ, Jesus, or Emmanuel, the title of “Christ” entails the activity of Father, Son, and Spirit. Earlier, when exploring the different titles and names of God, Irenaeus introduced the way “Christ” implied the activity of Father and Son. Now the activity of Father, Son, and Spirit at a point in history (Christ’s baptism) and through history (for those baptised into the Church) is implied (*subauditur*) in the title “Christ.”<sup>97</sup>

Thus, he points out that it was not an impassible Christ who descended on Jesus, but, Jesus himself, since he was the Christ, suffered for us, lay in the tomb, and rose again, descended and ascended, the Son of God having been made Son of man, just as the very name indicates. Indeed, by the name of Christ is implied He who anointed and He who was anointed and the very unction with which He was anointed. And indeed, the Father anointed, the Son was truly anointed in the Spirit, who is the unction. Just

96 Briggman, “The Holy Spirit as the Unction of Christ in Irenaeus,” 171–193. By adopting Houssiau (1955), he argues against Smith and Orbe’s specific wording that this baptism account was a qualitative empowerment, and Briggman concludes that the anointing of the Holy Spirit was a “non-qualitative empowerment” that did not change Christ’s humanity.

97 This same verb (*subauditur*) appears in *haer.* 1.9.1 in the introduction to the Rule and *haer.* 2.1.3, showing that in his opponents’ system, Pleroma and First God are “heard together” or “implied.” In both contexts, Irenaeus argues that the activity or name cannot be conceived without God himself or God’s other powers.



as the Word says through Isaiah, “The Spirit of God is upon me, because He anointed me” (Is 61:1; Lk 4:18),<sup>98</sup> signifying the anointing Father, the anointed Son, and the unction, who is the Spirit.

significans quoniam non Christus impassibilis descendit in Iesum, sed ipse Iesus, Christus cum esset, passus est pro nobis, qui decubuit et resurrexit\* (cf. Ps 3:6), qui descendit et ascendit (cf. Eph 4:10), Filius Dei Filius hominis factus, quemadmodum et ipsum nomen significat: in Christi enim nomine subauditur qui unxit et ipse qui unctus est et ipsa unctio in qua unctus est; et unxit quidem Pater, unctus est uero Filius, in Spiritu qui est unctio; quemadmodum per Esaia ait Sermo: *Spiritus Dei super me, propter quod unxit me*, significans et ungentem Patrem et unctum Filium et unctionem qui est Spiritus.<sup>99</sup>

Just as scripture uses the titles “God” and “Lord” to describe both Father and Son (*haer.* 3.6), so too, the title “Christ” does not refer only to the activity of the Son, because the names of God are mutually entailing. The Son is distinguishable from the Father and Spirit, but his titles entail the activity of the Father and Spirit. Furthermore, this activity of baptism is carried into the experience of the Church. As noted by Behr, the anointing of the apostles at Pentecost and the baptism of a Christian are dependent on the anointing of Christ.<sup>100</sup> The descent of the Spirit at the baptism of Christ and at Pentecost are proof that the Christian receives the seal of the Spirit (2 Cor 1:22) at the laver, and “through the Spirit, we receive the image and inscription of the Father and Son.”<sup>101</sup> The mutually entailing activity of God through history for the Church is founded on the title “Christ.” This reference to the title of Christ is not describing a qualitative change in the nature of Christ at baptism. In just this passage, the same Jesus Christ who was born, and who was baptised, who died, who was buried, and who rose again is the anointed one.<sup>102</sup> The same passage used to support a description of Christ’s anointing (Is 61:1) is also used to describe his pre-Incarnate appearance and activity, when exploring the titles “God” and “Lord” from the Septuagint (*haer.* 3.6.1). The mutually entailing work of Father,

98 See *Dem.* 47.

99 *haer.* 3.18.3 (SC 211.350–352).

100 Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 175–176.

101 *haer.* 3.17.3.

102 He argues that Emmanuel (*God with us*) born of a Virgin (from Is 7:14–15) is the same *man* foretold by the prophet (Jer 17:9), who is the Christ announced by Paul who was born, suffered, died, and was buried (1 Cor 15:3–4, 12, 21), this is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Son, and Spirit in the title of “Christ” refers not only to the unseparated divine activity in the Incarnation, but also to the unseparated divine activity for the Church.<sup>103</sup>

### 3.3 *The Son’s Name Entails the Father’s Activity in Haer. 4.17.6*

In this final section I argue that Irenaeus applies the principle of divine simplicity to the names of God used in the church’s worship. In *haer.* 4.17.6, Irenaeus employs a metaphor of a painting king to argue that the work of Father and Son are entailed in the name “Jesus Christ” at the Eucharist. Irenaeus has already utilised the metaphor of God as *Artifex* and as King.<sup>104</sup> Here in *haer.* 4.17.6, he employs both, with a king painting an image (or making a mosaic) of his Son.<sup>105</sup>

103 A more speculative connection could be made with *haer.* 3.20.1–2. Throughout *haer.* 3.6ff, Irenaeus argues that Christ actually suffered, because, for example, the martyrs actually suffered (see *haer.* 3.16.4). Then, in *haer.* 3.20, Irenaeus begins to argue for the long-suffering of God (*magnanimitas* in the Latin, but likely μακροθυμία in the Greek). Far from being a patripassionist argument, this would show the only way in which the suffering of the Christ was not entirely separated from God. In *haer.* 3.20.2, because of the long-suffering of God, humanity is able to participate in immortality, and by this, humanity comes to understand “all the rest of God’s powers” (*reliquas virtutes Dei omnes*) and how great God is (sc 211.388).

104 In *haer.* 1.8.1, God is described as the σοφὸς τεχνίτης or *sapiens artifex*, and Osborn attributes this theme to Irenaeus’ preference for aesthetic fitness. Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 173. During the second century, Gaul had a boom in mosaics, resulting in, “the ‘Viennese school’ of mosaics.” Here, Irenaeus describes a portrait, either painting or mosaic, of the king’s son. This portrait mosaic reflects the art scene of Gaul in the second-century. In a villa halfway between Lyons and Vienne, scholars have found one of the *oldest* polychromatic *mosaic portraits*, dated to around the first century, which has been described as exemplary of Gallo-Roman artists and which demonstrates a shift in Gallic adaptation of Hellenistic iconography. Catherine Balmelle and Jean-Pierre Darmon, *La mosaïque dans les gaules romaines* (Paris: Picard, 2017), 89–91; 101–102. The prevalence of artistic imagery in *Against Heresies* has also been noted by Grant, who theorises on the relevance of art and music in *haer.* 1.31.2–32.2. Grant examines the list of subjects given by Irenaeus (which includes music, painting, sculpture of brass and marble, and similar arts) with lists of Aristotle (*met.* 1025b20), Galen (*Protrepticus* 5, 14), and Philostratus (*Gymn.* 1; *Vita Apoll.* 8.7.3) and shows them to be comparable, and concludes that Irenaeus’ assessment of the Carpocratians is at least partially true. See R.M. Grant, “Carpocratians and Curriculum: Irenaeus’ Reply,” *Harvard Theological Review* 79, no. 1 (1986). This imagery is used in *haer.* 1.8.1, where the proper arrangement of the mosaic gives an image of the king. This passage illustrates how the proper arrangement of scripture can give a correct understanding of God. Again, in *haer.* 2.2.3, a King who plans the building of a city is one of the metaphors used to show that God himself planned and created the world.

105 The Latin *pingere* and the Greek γράφειν were the same technical terms used for the work of making Mosaics in Gaul. See Balmelle and Darmon, *La mosaïque dans les gaules romaines*, 51–52.

The image is describes as belonging to the king with a double meaning, both because it is the image of his son and because he himself painted the image. Theologically, the image of the Son also reflects the Father's because it is his begotten Son and because he planned (or painted, in the metaphor) the activity of salvation for humanity. In this way, the name glorified in the sacrifice entails both the Son, who carried out the plan of salvation, and the Father, who planned it.

This metaphor illustrates the ongoing argument from a large portion of Book 4, that the old and new sacrifices, from the old and new covenants, are not contradictory, but rather, the new fulfilled the old. This metaphor marks a transition in the argument of Book 4 (spanning *haer.* 4.12–19). Irenaeus has argued that the Gospel is the fulfilment of the Old Testament Law (*haer.* 4.12–16) and he will argue that the Eucharist is the fulfilment of the Old Testament sacrifices (*haer.* 4.17–19), but precisely in *haer.* 4.17.5–6 there is a shift in focus from covenant to sacrifice.<sup>106</sup> After a series of scriptural citations on Old Testament sacrifice, this metaphor of the painting king illustrates how the sacrifice of Christ fulfills the Old Testament promise that the temple sacrifices would cease (in Mal 1:10–11).<sup>107</sup>

Which is the name, that is glorified among the people?<sup>108</sup> Indeed, this is our Lord, through whom the Father is glorified and humanity is glorified. For since he is his special Son and by him humanity was made (cf. Matt 1:21; Lk 1:31), he is called this [name] himself.<sup>109</sup> In the same way, if a king himself paints an image of his son, he may justly say that the image is his, both because it is of his son and because he himself made it.<sup>110</sup> So also,

<sup>106</sup> This is primarily based on the organization of Book 4 by Bacq, but both Behr and Donovan also separate *haer.* 4.17–19 as its own subsection on the Eucharist fulfilling the sacrifices of the Old Testament. Bacq, *De l'ancienne à la nouvelle alliance selon S. Irénée*, 131–147; Donovan, *One Right Reading?*, 109–111; Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 98.

<sup>107</sup> Through these citations, mostly from the Psalms and Prophets, Irenaeus argues that God wants obedience rather than sacrifice. Bacq claims these are specifically anti-Marcionite. Bacq, *De l'ancienne à la nouvelle alliance selon S. Irénée*, 135–137.

<sup>108</sup> According to Bacq, this allusion to Acts 4:12 is paralleled in *Dem.* 96. Note, however, that Acts 4:12 is not explicitly cited in this entire section. See Bacq, *De l'ancienne à la nouvelle alliance selon S. Irénée*, 139, n. 2.

<sup>109</sup> Orbe believes Irenaeus is also basing his argument on Romans 8:32 and Luke 1:31. He also calls attention to the similarity between this passage, *haer.* 5.1.3 and *Dem.* 53, in both of which the Father is the author of the Incarnation. See Orbe, *Teologia de San Ireneo*, 4.238, n. 39 and 1.96. See also 1 *apol.* 33.5.

<sup>110</sup> Here, Orbe and Coxe follow the Latin, but the Syriac suggests this should read, “both because it is his son and because he himself made it.” Translations generally provide a

the Father acknowledges that the name of Jesus Christ, which is glorified in the church throughout the world, is his own, both because it is [the name] of his son, and also because he himself gave the writing/painting (*scribens*) for the salvation of humanity (cf. Acts 4:12). Therefore, since the proper name of the Son is of the Father, and the church sacrifices to the Almighty God through Jesus Christ, he rightly said, “And in all places incense is offered in my name, and pure sacrifice.” (Mal 1:11).<sup>111</sup> Indeed, in Revelation John says incense is the prayers of the saints (cf. Rev 5:8).

Quod est autem nomen quod in gentibus glorificatur, quam quod est Domini nostri, per quem glorificatur Pater et glorificatur homo? Et quoniam proprii Filii ejus est et ab eo factus est homo, suum illum vocat. Quemadmodum si quis rex ipse filii sui pingat imaginem, juste suam illam dicit imaginem secundum utrumque, quoniam et filii ejus est et quoniam ipse fecit eam: sic et Jesu Christi nomen, quod per universum mundum glorificatur in Ecclesia, suum esse confitetur Pater, et quoniam Filii ejus est et quoniam ipse scribens id ad salutem dedit hominum. Quoniam ergo nomen Filii proprium Patris est et in Deo omnipotente per Jesum Christum offert Ecclesia, bene ait secundum utraque: *Et in omni loco incensum offertur nomini meo et sacrificium purum*. Incensa autem Johannes in Apocalypsi orationes ait esse sanctorum.<sup>112</sup>

In a general sense, this passage is about worship, and it does include references to incense and prayer. However, it is more specifically about the Eucharist. After an argument on the sacrifices of the old covenant, Irenaeus cites the *hoc est meum corpus* (Matt 26:26; Mar 14:22; Lk 22:19; and 1 Cor 11:24) and describes the Eucharist as the fulfillment of the prophets (*haer.* 4.17.5). Citations of Malachi 1:10–11 are the bookends and the key to this metaphor of the painting king. It is the last passage cited in *haer.* 4.17.5, it is echoed in the question that introduces the metaphor, it is the reason Christ’s “name” in the Eucharist is explored, and it is cited again after the metaphor. “Name” is repeated three times in the first

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word for the genitive to modify: “because it is [the likeness] of his son” as in ANF 1:484; or “por ser el (retrato) de su hijo” in Orbe, *Teologia de San Ireneo*, 238. My translation follows Rousseau (SC 100.595), “que c’est celui de sons fils,” and is open to the possibility that this is referring to the son, but still follows the Latin by incorporating “image”.

111 Malachi 1:10–11 is also quoted by Clement of Alexandria in *str.* 5.14, also in the context of an argument for God as the universal king. See *didache* 14.3, Justin’s *dial.* 28.5, 41.2–3, 116.3, 117.1, 4, 120.4 and Tertullian’s *adv. Iud.* 5.4, 5.7, *adv. Marc.* 3.22.6, 4.1.8 from *Biblia Patristica* 178–179.

112 *haer.* 4.17.6 (SC 100.594).

citation of Malachi 1:10–11, so Irenaeus explains what this means. In his edition, Harvey claims that Irenaeus is here referring to the Hebrew origins for Jesus's name (YHWH is salvation) because, he claims, "the appellative Christ can in no sense pertain to the Father."<sup>113</sup> This is symptomatic of the general scholarly perspective, but it misses Irenaeus' regular references back to the names and titles of God, and particularly, of Christ. Here in *haer.* 4.17.5, the name of the Son in the Eucharist does entail the Father because (1) it is the name of *His* Son and (2) because he is writing/drawing the process of salvation. In this passage, the Father is never identified as the Son, yet the church's worship includes both Father and Son. His discussion of God's titles in the Eucharist is an outlier within second-century Christian discourse,<sup>114</sup> but his commitment to the view that God is simple causes him to reiterate that the many scriptural names and titles of God are mutually entailing, including those often considered unique to either Father or Son.

#### 4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I further developed my claim that Irenaeus adheres to divine simplicity beyond *haer.* 2.13, specifically his claim that, because God is simple, God's names and titles are mutually entailing. I argued that Irenaeus continues to describe and label God's powers and names as mutually entailing. First, I highlighted *haer.* 2.35, where he refers to the Septuagint to argue that God's titles and powers are mutually entailing. Irenaeus argues that the different names of God do not describe a God whose substance is composed of separated powers, but rather, they each identify "one and the same" God and creator. His argument complements and develops his earlier claim that God is simple, despite the many names of God found in scripture. Then, I focused on God's powers. Irenaeus remains consistent with his three uses of the terminology of power as found in the Rule of Truth, but he develops the concept of the power of God by applying it explicitly to the Word and Wisdom. Because God is simple, God's will entails God's power in the activity of creating and reveal-

<sup>113</sup> See Hv 4.30.1 (2.200), n. 2.

<sup>114</sup> Daniélou points out that, while Christ was designated as the "Name of God" quite regularly in Early Christianity, there are only two cases where this relationship between God's name and the title "Christ" is applied to Eucharistic prayer. Daniélou points to *Barn.* 10.2–3 and *exc. Thdot.* 82.1, and highlights that in the *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, the bread and oil are sanctified by the name, echoing James 5:14. See Daniélou, *The theology of Jewish Christianity*, 147–163, but especially 55–56.

ing through God's Word and Wisdom. This develops the argument made in Chapter 3, that the concept of divine simplicity grounds Irenaeus' claim that God's will entails God's activity. Irenaeus' commitment to divine simplicity also means that God's power, wisdom, and goodness are labelled as mutually entailing (*simul ... ostenditur*; ὁμοῦ ... δέικνυται in *haer.* 4.38.1) in the activity of creation. God's power entails God's will and activity, and this entailment differentiates God's power from all created powers, in line with Irenaeus' concern to clearly differentiate creator from creature. Lastly, I focused on God's names and titles. I argued that divine simplicity is the conceptual foundation for Irenaeus' argument that the titles "God" and "Lord" entail both the Father and the Son. The activity of Father, Son, and Spirit is entailed in (*subauditur* in *haer.* 3.18.3) the title "Christ," and the name of the Son in the Eucharist entails the activity of both the Father and the Son. Divine simplicity underlies Irenaeus' descriptions of divine titles and names, even in the Church's worship.

At different moments of this chapter, I have paralleled Irenaeus' arguments with other religious discourses of his day. His discussion of God's titles initially echoed Midrashic interpretation of the Septuagint, but his argument regarding the power of God was more comparable to third-century Christian appropriations of the Platonic concept of power. Most importantly, the principle of divine simplicity helps Irenaeus develop second-century arguments regarding God's names beyond the Apologists, in an argument that looks more like later writers who also depended on the principle of divine simplicity. Throughout Irenaeus' arguments, divine simplicity remains central when discussing God's power and names, and he participates in an early Christian shift in discourse about God.

## Conclusion

By building on the recent scholarly work, I have not had to focus solely on *if* Irenaeus is utilising divine simplicity, but have been able to explore *how*. This reading of Irenaeus' version of divine simplicity seeks to start from its historical context, as an interweaving of philosophical and scriptural language that engages Christian debates among his contemporaries. His view of divine simplicity is part of a larger Christian appropriation of the principle, demonstrated by the particular terms and arguments that reflect the intersection of philosophical and scriptural discourse within Christian debates.

Part 1 of this book presents my reading of Irenaeus, that divine simplicity clarifies claims made about God in the Rule of Truth. He does this by providing a right reading of philosophy as it applies to scriptural language. In particular, he uses pre-Socratic language while opposing Stoic psychology in an argument about divine simplicity, engaging second-century debates regarding proper usage of the scriptural language for God. Rather than discarding his opponents' use of philosophy, he appropriated many of the same terms and concepts to argue for his particular view of the simple God. In challenging his opponents' description of God, Irenaeus rejects interpretations of scriptural language that separate God from his powers, will, activity, and names, because God is simple.

Part 2 traces the central role of divine simplicity in a web of theological themes. Irenaeus' explanation of divine simplicity has immediate implications for his views on divine generation, the divine activity of creation, and the divine names and powers of God, and these are developed further in his wider discussions of these themes. The concept of divine simplicity means that God's will cannot be separated from the activity of creation in the providential meaning of the metaphor of containment. The language of divine simplicity preserves a sense of distinction between God and his powers in divine generation, regardless of which metaphor is used to explain this generation. The concept of divine simplicity also operates in Irenaeus' metaphor of God's hands because the activity of creation entails the activity of revelation, God's will entails God's activity, and the distinct roles of Father, Son, and Spirit entail one another. God's activity is not separated. Lastly, Irenaeus argues, in several places, that because God is simple, God's names and powers are "heard" and "seen" together. As a result, God's power entails God's will, wisdom, and goodness, and titles like "Lord," "God," and "Christ" entail the activity of the Father and Son (and, the Spirit). In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus adheres to the principle of divine simplicity when exploring the meaning of scripture and the Rule of Truth when

they describe God, providing a way to negotiate the tension between the claim that God is one and the many scriptural descriptions of God's will, activity, names, and powers. The concept of divine simplicity is foundational to Irenaeus' descriptions of the divine economy, but it also undergirds his understanding of the descriptions or "attributes" of God *in se*.

In each of these theological themes, I have also traced ways in which this concept of divine simplicity plays a regulating role in Irenaeus' thought, setting parameters on appropriate discourse about God. The first parameter, requiring that language about God be distinct from the language about created things, highlights Irenaeus' knowledge of philosophy and is a theme that is generally accepted by scholars of Irenaeus. However, the second parameter pushes against scholarly consensus: that God names and powers are mutually entailing, distinct in unity, and therefore not identical without distinction. This rises out of his consistent use of different terminology to describe this unity in distinction: in Chapter 2 I show that he describes God's names and powers as heard together (*coobaudiuntur*), in Chapter 4, that he uses the Aristotelian language of "*similis*" alongside spatial references of God's powers being similar and near each other, and in Chapter 6, that God's power, wisdom, and goodness are displayed together (*simul ... ostenditur*; ὁμοῦ ... δέικνυται) and Father and Son are entailed (*subauditur*) in the title "Christ". These terminological examples provide specific evidence within a larger argument that retains distinction in unity. All of these passages argue for God's unity, but two of them explicitly contain the term *simplex*. For Irenaeus, divine simplicity does not eliminate distinction between God's powers, and instead, his argument holds to a tension between unity and distinction.

In some ways, Irenaeus' usage of divine simplicity may raise more questions than it answers, particularly considering the theological developments of ensuing generations. It is not unusual for Irenaeus to hold to two truths in tension without resolving them, truths that seem mutually exclusive (or paradoxical) to the modern eye, but if read within their context, they do address second century concerns. The is also true with his view of divine simplicity.

For example, in light of other second-century arguments, he uses the terminology of the simple God to argue for unity between God and his generated powers without arguing for a separation, unlike Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*, but he does so by retaining distinction, unlike Tatian (see Chapter 4, section 1). Irenaeus did not adhere to either of these two extant positions that already used the language of simplicity. However, as he attempted to manoeuvre the tension between unity and distinction in divine generation through different metaphors of generation, he did not adhere to established language, since it was available only to later generations.



Similarly, Irenaeus' concept of divine simplicity has implications on his language of the activity of Father, Word, and Spirit, but he does not provide a Trinitarian formula that would explain how a simple God should be understood alongside the metaphor of God's Hands. He rejects the language of separation that comes from describing the Word as a tool or assistant, as in Philo or Theophilus, and instead depends on a unity of God's activity, while providing a differentiation of roles (see Chapter 5, especially section 3.2). For Irenaeus, the terminology of "simple" is not isolated to the Father in exclusion of the generated powers (as in Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora*), but instead, it is applied to God in general. In fact, in discussions of divine generation, the terminology of simplicity is present in the language of generation and what is generated.

A further example arises when considering Monarchianism. It also is very possible that parts of Irenaeus' argument for divine simplicity would have been used in the ensuing Monarchian debates, which began to arise at this time with its epicentre in Asia Minor. However, it is clear that he retains a sense of distinction between Father and Son. He even retains distinction between the Word and the Father when discussing the shared terminology of "Lord" and "God" in metaphors, such as the painting King (see Chapter 6). In fact, in arguments for the unity resulting from the titles shared by Father and Son, Irenaeus uses the same exegesis as Justin, who clearly differentiated, and even subordinated, the Son to the Father (see Chapter 6, section 3.1). Within a second-century context, Irenaeus is arguing for unity, but he opposes views that overemphasised it in a way that lost distinction between God and God's powers, or between Father and Word. This is an unresolved tension.

Questions of reception open avenues for further research, but they do not lessen the momentous shift provided by Irenaeus' concept of divine simplicity. Though Irenaeus does not fully explain how distinction aligns with simplicity, he makes a crucial first step in the development of the Christian appropriation of the concept of divine simplicity. He is the first to explain his concept of divine simplicity, and he models its theological importance by adhering to the concept of simplicity while retaining a sense of distinction in descriptions of God's will, activity, powers, and names.

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This book focuses on Irenaeus as key to the early Christian appropriation of divine simplicity as a philosophical principle, since he is the first Christian source to explain his usage in relation to God. Beyond providing limits for what a simple God can and cannot mean, he also applies this principle to God's activity (i.e. creating), and to God's names and powers. There is a growing interest in the early Christian appropriation of divine simplicity: Simons' study is timely as the first book to focus exclusively on the earliest explanation and application.

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ISSN 0920 623X

ISBN 978-90-04-67762-3



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